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LABOUR AND SORROW

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LABOUR AND SORROW

SERMONS PREACHED ON VARIOUS OCCASIONS

BY

W. J. KNOX LITTLE M.A.

CANON RESIDENTIARY OF WORCESTER AND VICAR OF HOAR CROSS

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I Dedicate this Volume

(without permission)

to

My Wife

as a slender acknowledgment of the many lessons

in

Truth and Duty

I have learnt from her tender and unassuming goodness

and

In Grateful Recognition

of

a very thorough and noble character

ever ready with a high-minded unselfishness

to lighten the labours and sympathise with the sorrows

of

Toiling Lives

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PREFACE

THE Sermons contained in the present volume do not form a regular course. They have been preached in different places and on various occasions. Some who heard them thought they were helped by them, and have asked for their publication. One thread of thought connects them, in some degree, with one another, viz., the view of life implied in the title of the volume.

It would be pedantic to make acknowledgments to the teachers of the Past whose words have suggested thoughts. It is not possible to teachers of the Present, for one finds it difficult to say where one picks up crumbs of thought. But, of men whom I respect, while I differ from them profoundly, I desire to name the late John Stuart Mill, and Dr. Martineau, as teaching me much; and above all, one with whose teaching I entirely agree, my revered and beloved friend and teacher, the Very Rev. R. W. Church, late Dean of St. Paul's. Whatever other men's writings may have suggested, however, I am

entirely responsible myself for the teachings here. In these sermons I have had before my mind one general view of life.

On being asked, therefore, to contribute a volume to the series in which these appear, I have thought that between them there is a sufficient tie of connected idea to make them interesting to those who desired to read them, and have hoped that—in a time when so many hearts are failing—they might be of use in cheering souls on to bear bravely and act nobly in the trials of a life of Labour and Sorrow.

W. J. KNOX LITTLE.

The College, Worcester,
Michaelmas 1894.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
LABOUR AND SORROW	11
THE DUTY OF STRENGTH	37
THE TEACHING OF DISCIPLINED THOUGHT	67
THE USES OF LIFE FOR OTHERS	97
THE END OF SORROW	129
THE OUTLOOK OF THE SOUL	157
RELIGION AND ART	183
THE SOUL AND THE UNSEEN	209
THE SOUL AND ITS PERPLEXITIES	235
LOVE AND SORROW	267
PRAYER	287
LOVE AND DEATH	311

LABOUR AND SORROW

"Labour and sorrow"—Ps. xc. 10

LABOUR AND SORROW

THIS is the Psalmist's description of the best that man can be and do after he has numbered some seventy years. Like everything else in the Psalms, this vivid phrase touches deep into the quick of human life.

For indeed the Psalms are for all times and for all men. Here we can never go wrong. Dante in his "Divina Commedia" penetrates into many depths of human character, and touches the quick of human sin. He soars with his lofty imagination, or dives with his incisive fancy, up to the highest heaven, or down to the depths of the pit of hell. Still, *he* can be obscure or narrow, or grotesque, or possibly one-sided or unduly severe. "The Imitation of Christ" can touch the heart by its intimate knowledge of human longings, and its tender devotion to the love of God. Yet men *have* imagined it narrow, or wanting in a width of sympathy, owing to its origin and the circumstances of its author's life. But no

one who thinks or feels, no one to whom human life has opened in any of its many-sided phases, no one who can understand the power of clean-cut convictions side by side with a large and loving and wondering gaze into the mysteries of human life, can ever attribute either one-sidedness, or inhumanity, or narrowness, or failure in power of deep and penetrating sympathy,—to the Psalms. The central force, the one great object, the never-forgotten presence in this wonderful book is God. And there, in all the ups and downs of his varying fortunes, in his commonplace temptations, in his higher moments of exalted thought, in the deep yearnings of his soul for better things, in his bitter complainings over the perplexities and trials of his lot, in all that is best, in his more real and penetrating moments, in all that is darkest in his times of submission to passing impulse, when he is the puppet of circumstance and the slave of custom—in all his spiritual joys and sorrows—*there*, as in a mirror, we see ourselves. *There* is man!

The strange thing—let us pause to remember—about this wonderful collection of Hebrew poetry is, that it has been equally suitable to men of totally different modes of thought, and in times far removed from one another. This book deals with the deepest things. Here is lofty poetry. Here is

religion in life, and spring, and action, and power. Here is a sense of God as being approachable and real, as never in religious poetry before. Here His awfulness, His power, His creative strength, His vigour in a world of sense and things, is never forgotten. Side by side with this, however, here is God in the most intimate relation with His creatures; in His providence, His tenderness, His fatherly care. Here, too, after all is said and done—after his work, his struggle, his mistakes, his successes—is Man in himself, in the deepest longings of his soul, in the wildest aspirations and the saddest defeats. Here is a description of his life in one real, all-embracing aspect—"labour and sorrow."

II.

It is true, indeed, the Psalmist's description has about it a ring of sadness which almost suggests a morbid view of life. He is speaking of old age. He seems to realise that man ascends the hill of life, with some touches of illusive brightness, and certainly with the sunshine of increasing, perhaps delusive, hope; but there *is* a summit, there *is* a decline, and the time is reached when, if among the rocks and chasms of a threatening slope he does not at once find his grave, at least he has to face the fact

that henceforth the joy and vigour and glory are gone. "The splendour of the grass, the glory of the flower," have nothing more to do with him. Henceforth whatever strength he has, it only means "labour and sorrow." Well, it may be saddening, it may in certain moods of mind be depressing, but it would be scarcely fair to call it morbid, for certainly it is true. There are indeed wonderful examples of great physical vitality in the aged, which seem to give the lie to such a view; but either there is in them a corresponding loss of the sense of the supernatural and of the feeling of the near approach to the end, so suitable to old age; or there is—what is *so* beautiful—the young heart, which enables them to enter into the joys of others and to brighten younger lives; while to them themselves, with all the accumulation of sad experiences, and all the sense of loss which has been brought to them by the vanished years, life is really, though with ennobling tenderness, "labour and sorrow."

For, grand as the Psalms are in their deep and searching views of human life, more has come to us on this, as on all things, from the Christian faith.

The New Testament has taught us to look upon life as a pilgrimage. We are on a journey. Our bearing amid its difficulties and perplexities and disappointments is to determine our cast of character

in the unimagined Beyond. If it please God to call us soon, then, "whom the gods love die young." If it please Him to spare us late, we must, we are intended to, gather the ripening fruit of years.

In one sense the Christian may endorse the Psalmist's saddening pronouncement of the state of advancing age—"labour and sorrow"; in another sense, he has a brighter light shed by the coming and the suffering of the Lord, as to the meaning and the majesty of life, and even of old age. For the Christian, Life may be that indeed, but—something more :

Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made:
Our times are in His hand
Who saith, "A whole I planned,
Youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor be afraid!"

Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
Be our joys three-parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!

Therefore I summon age
To grant youth's heritage,
Life's struggle having so far reached its term:
Thence shall I pass, approved
A man, for aye removed
From the developed brute: a God though in the germ.

Enough now, if the Right
And Good and Infinite
Be named here, as thou callest thy hand thine own,
With knowledge absolute,
Subject to no dispute
From fools that crowded youth, nor let thee feel alone.

Be there, for once and all,
Severed great minds from small,
Announced to each his station in the Past!
Was I, the world arraigned,
Were they, my soul disdained,
Right? Let age speak the truth and give us peace at last.

Yes, there is a glory in age. It would be wrong for a Christian to accept the Psalmist's dictum in any morbid, conventional, or shallow spirit. There is a glory in age:

Look not thou down but up!
To uses of a cup,
The festal board, lamp's flash and trumpet's peal,
The new wine's foaming flow,
The Master's lips aglow!
Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what needst thou with
earth's wheel?

So, take and use Thy work:
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim!
My times be in Thy hand!
Perfect the cup as planned!
Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same!

There *is* a noble work for age to do in those who are

seeking God. For us Christians—oh! let us remember it, to conquer all that is craven or cowardly —a young heart may be carried into the eighties and nineties; nothing in Christianity is ever morbid —even though in a solemn sense there be "labour and sorrow."

III.

We cannot close our eyes to the fact, however, that the aspect which life must have presented to the Psalmist was a much less hopeful one than that with which we are supplied by Christianity. Revelation, it cannot be doubted, was gradual: and there was certainly no such clear view in the older dispensation of the relation of the soul to the future, as we have been furnished with since "life and immortality were brought to light by the Gospel." There were of course flashes from another world, which shine upon us again and again in the writings of the Old Testament; but there was an uncertainty and a settled sadness about the views of another life, which were only mitigated by that strong faith in God as the Ruler and Guider of all things which was characteristic of the religion of ancient Israel. It would be excusable, therefore, if the view of the Psalmist was in one sense more morbid than could be justified in the case of a Christian. In another

sense, of course, it *is* a true view. There is a sorrowful side to old age. If it is looked at only from the point of view of mere naturalism and human calculation, it may well be described in the most pathetic sense as "labour and sorrow." We only act, then, under the inspiration of Christianity, and consistently with its teachings, if we remember that *this* description—and in no morbid sense either—is a very true description of one aspect of human life.

"Labour and sorrow!" No life, we may fairly say, which comes up at all to the human ideal, can be fairly described otherwise than as a life of *labour*.

For, brethren, we find ourselves in this world obliged to live and act in accordance with various relations. (1) We all of us have our places in the Christian Church. The collective body, indeed, is the witness to the truth and the home of grace; but each individual member has his own responsibility in helping to make clear the one and to use and diffuse the other: this is a relation of the highest and gravest importance. The tendency of human selfishness and self-interested action is to blind men's eyes at once to its dignity and its responsibility. None the less, it is important to impress deeply upon the soul the abiding and fruitful thought, not only of its own greatness from its individual character and immortality, but of its

greatness because of its relation to the Church. From a sense of this there comes a deeper sense of the duty of united worship and a stronger faith in those wonderful promises which have been made to a vigorous exercise, in supernatural things, of united effort. Nothing probably is so powerful in removing the hurtful prejudices and disbeliefs which cripple the effective energy of the Catholic Body, as the bringing home more and more to *each* soul its dignity and responsibility from its relation to the Church.

(2) We are each of us, wherever Christianity is really active, in close relation to the family and the household. Out of this relationship there arise many special duties and various responsibilities, the recognition and fulfilment of which are not only of the last importance to the collective body, but go far towards the training of the soul itself. Love, which is the very spring of real virtue, self-restraint, mutual forbearance, and willing and cheerful work; the bright flashes of character struck into light by association with other characters; the regulated modes of thought and action which are only learned by association with others, and a sense of their needs, and a willing desire to give free play and full value to their thoughts; the sense of unity with diversity of character, of quiet trust and willing self-sacrifice, of the possibility of interior rest of mind and heart on

others amidst the external distractions of outer life ;—these things are learnt from our family relation. The ties may be solely the ties of blood, or those of deep and special affection of souls knit to one another by gifts of affinity which are shown in striking devotion, or the sense of thorough mutual understanding ; or they may be ties more artificial, arising from circumstances or from the claims of Christian charity—as in instances of the relations of the bereaved and orphaned towards those who act to them in the place of their natural protectors ; but whatever be the peculiar colour or degree of the tie, it still remains true that the family relation has a special force of its own in calling out character and training the soul.

Both of these relations enter very deeply into human life. Both of them require special activities, and if they bring with them real joys, they entail upon each member his share of anxiety, or care, or sadness. Both, however full of dignity, however necessary for the training of the soul, bear real witness to the fact that one aspect of life may be described—in no morbid mood or from empty and selfish melancholy, but in a temper which, if serious, is not desponding, which, if grave, is at least bracing and strong—as "labour and sorrow."

IV.

(3) But, above all, we belong to the great family of humanity, and it has been truly said that there is one duty which is common to the human race, and may be described as *culture*. In the early records of Scripture we are told that God placed man in the garden "to dress it and to keep it." And this short statement reminds us that a primary duty of mankind is to subject to himself, and treat—so that its highest powers may be developed and its fullest possibilities attained—that material earth, which with all its varied gifts of beauty and assistance, is at once his home and his grave. Man's physical frame, his mortal body, is closely akin to the material elements of that world in which he lives, and his physical strength, guided by thought and skill, has to be expended in the constant effort to teach the material universe to minister to the needs of that material frame. In the fulfilment of this duty—for a duty as well as a necessity clearly it is—there is a need of patience and persevering effort, and inquiry and careful thought. In this department of duty, as in others, "knowledge is power." Man is obliged to make himself acquainted with the mysteries of material nature in order to exercise an entire dominion over the material world.

The simplest form of culture, therefore, is the culture of this world in which we live. There is a kind of covenant here between man and the earth which is his home; if he does his duty by *it*, it will do its duty by *him*. However much we may be inclined to dream poetical dreams over nature unmolested by the tread of human foot, it is nevertheless true that Nature herself cannot do her best for bounty and blessing without the intervention and the energy of man. It is a strange thing to think of—we often forget it, but it is undeniably true—that *everything* which has to do with our external life, its necessities or its comforts, its means of touching our senses and delighting our desires, as a matter of fact—to use an ordinary expression—"comes from the land." Look round any sitting-room you like in any quiet English home, or in the stateliest palace in the world; look at the noblest temples of ancient Greece; look at the most solemn basilicas of the Middle Age; there is not one single object that has not in some form or other come from this earth on which we live. And in order that these things should have come, in order to the mysterious transformations presented before our eyes in every such survey as that which we have supposed, what has been the indispensable condition? Is it not that man's life must be—in no morbid sense whatever, but as

a fulfilment of its deepest necessity and highest nobility—described as *labour?*

v.

As we observe man at the present time, and as we observe him in the course of his history, we cannot but notice that there are different sections of workmen who have represented—more or less perfectly according to their gifts and callings—the duty and the necessity of labour. By a not unpardonable inaccuracy, we have got into the habit of talking of one special division of workers under the title of the "labouring classes." By this we mean, those who contribute towards the primary and external dominion over, and appropriation of, this earth to the purposes of man. Theirs is a noble though a comparatively simple calling. Skill of a kind they must have, and knowledge up to a certain point; but for the most part *their* function is the energetic carrying out in detail that which is known through patient toil and discovery by other sections of workmen in this great world of labour.

Then, especially as civilisation advances, there comes in all the varied system of handicraft. As we talk of the "labouring classes," meaning the

workers on the land, so we have drifted into the habit of talking of "working men," meaning those who are employed in handicrafts, or duties connected with the various forms of mechanism, which more and more affect modern life. As labour on the land has the blessing upon it of Holy Scripture and the earliest records of religion, so also has the work of the "working man." Our Blessed Lord Himself seems to have spent much of the time of His earthly life in the exercise of the craft of a carpenter. St. Paul, amidst his many spiritual and intellectual labours, perseveringly exercised a form of work belonging strictly to a "working man." In his most tried and busy moments he seems to have kept some hours in which he could stitch at the canvas for the tents, and by his own efforts "pay his way." We know that in the Middle Ages the Church threw the ægis of religion over trade, by blessing and using the various guilds and confraternities which had always to do with some form of labour, but were also essentially religious societies. In this way, the Church of Christ, as well as her Divine Master, recognised the sacredness and dignity of work, and bore witness to the fact that life—and in no morbid spirit, but with a real sense of its meaning and power—may be described as labour.

VI.

Trade has, as we know, assumed a greater and greater importance as the world has grown older. There are certain features doubtless in the trade of modern times which may well cause anxiety to a Christian. We have all heard of the terrible temptations connected with it, of the dishonesties, chicaneries, and trickeries which are sometimes, apparently, accepted as a part of its necessary rules; yet trade may also have a very noble side. In some form or other, it is a necessity and a benefit to society; it promotes the active intercourse of nations; its active rather than its speculative side is probably—in spite of all that has been said to the contrary—that which gives it its chief attraction to the Anglo-Saxon race. It arouses and implies interests which tend to discourage war and to make very much indeed for peace. In the mind of a serious man it may well lead to trust in God, because, as in the direct dealings of the farmer or labourer with the land, so in the dealings of the merchant, with supply and demand, with production and acquisition, there must always be, even in the case of the cleverest and most skilful, many things which defy human foresight and cannot be provided for by human skill.

It is true, indeed, that often in the feverish excitement of speculation, or in the constant anxieties from which the trader above all men cannot expect to be exempted, God and the higher things of the soul are too often forgotten. That, however, is only another way of saying that the gifts of God are constantly used against Himself by His fallen creature. In itself there is clearly nothing irreligious in trade. Before now it has called out noble faculties and trained noble characters. It is the fashion, in the present *set* of opinion, to abuse competition in language strangely unmeasured, and yet competition itself, which has been so fostered by trade, and seems almost necessary as a spring of impulse for it, has, as we know from the history of mankind, been a real element in the progress of the race.

If we fairly consider any of these lines of toil, we shall see indeed temptations to sin in all of them, as that will be found in any department of human activity, but we cannot close our eyes to the truth, that each one of them may have upon it the blessing of religion and may bear witness to the truth, that one of the noblest and most practical descriptions which can be given of human life is to say that "life is labour."

Indeed, the firm foundation of existence has

been, dear friends—has it not?—among the noblest races, patient, persevering toil. Wherever *that* was, *there* was stability. Otherwise, we find things shifting, we find sad vicissitudes, we find wild unsettlement, leading to the breaking up of the more stable and noble relations of life.

Our Aryan ancestors in central Asia were, if we are to trust the teachings and researches of antiquarians, workers on the land. And the noblest inspirations which have ever been drawn out of things for the progress of faithful work, may for the first whispers of the greatest of civilisations, have come from the earth itself. We have lived into an era, indeed, when anything rather than *work* seems too readily to be welcomed; when speculation takes the place of labour, and devotion to *chance* plays the part of a sense of the duty of toil. This, however, dear friends, we know too surely is a gross corruption; it is a treachery to man's highest nobility; it is a betrayal of the noblest demands of his essential character. The workshop of Nazareth may be humble, but it is godlike; the gaming-tables of Monte Carlo may be stimulating and attractive, but they are consequences of corruption, and they foretell a fall. Better, far better, remember, in view of eternity, the quiet, steady workman earning his wage in his humble home,

and doing his duty—than the most brilliant member of any society who earns undeserved reputation or power by merely artful insincerities or the sacrifice of principle. Work—honest, straight, and real, on whatsoever subject-matter—ennobles man, for at its best and noblest, life is labour.

VII.

In our own days one of the most serious thoughts connecting itself, for the religious man, with labour, is the strained relations of employer and employed. Nostrums of all sorts are offered to cure this. The wildest theories are broached—even by earnest and religious persons—for the somewhat sudden reconstruction of society, in order to do away this danger, in defiance of experience and at the expense of common-sense. These are large questions. It is rash to deal dogmatically with general tendencies; rash certainly to lay down the law on passing phases of opinion, or to tie one's convictions to the chariot-wheels of the last Radical scream, or the last Conservative wail, or the last philosophic dictum as to the best treatment of "social evolution." No; these things, dear friends, are too high or too deep for us ordinary people. There may be vast scientific interests involved in

the latest discoveries as to "atmospheric pressure," or theories of convertible media, in the scientific observation of heat as a mode of motion; and yet when all is said and done, for us poor common people the sun *does* shine, the flowers come up and open out in springtime, the morning dawn is heralded with soft, refreshing winds. For us the clouds of afternoon are strange in form, and sweet in colour, and marvellous in suggestiveness of the unimagined wonders of *individual* being, and in their teaching of the reach, the immeasurable reach, of being in the depth of the interspaces of that bright, unfathomed blue; for us the leafy woodlands still give their shade, their comfort, and their quiet—as once they did to those before us in the days long gone. For us the silent, solemn woods of winter stand stern and sad, yet patient in their waiting, glorified by the dim and fleeting robes of translucent purple around their leafless boughs. For us, too, the sounds of children's voices, the sweet faces of dear friends, the joy of kindliness, the love of woman—these speak, and teach, and call, and comfort, as they did to men before us long ago.

And so too, may we not say that principles of truth and duty have power now on human hearts, as long ago they had? May we not say that the work of Religion, the work of the Christian Church, is *not* to

settle the mysteries and solemnities of so great a thing as labour, by appealing to envy, jealousy, scorn, and hate and spite ; but rather, in her old, her serious, her quiet, her earnest way—like leaven leavening the lump, like her Master, leaning neither to strife nor envy, but, with firmness and faithfulness, to principle, making men to feel the greatness of justice, equity, and mutual respect—to bring back that atmosphere of love—which must be if things are to be well with us—to the sacred field of labour ?

VIII.

And what are we to say of all the varied fields of intellectual toil ?

It is not to be denied that, looking at the opening efforts of the Christian Church, these things *seem* to fall into the background. In that vast upheaving of things with which the Christian Church began, there seemed no room for all these fields of labour. And yet, my brothers (is it not true ?), we make no sort of sense of Christianity, unless we grant that the Master said many things, which *in detail* certainly were transient, in order to *start* His young society, while underneath were *principles* which last for ever.

It is true, indeed—we cannot honestly deny it—that at first with firmness, almost fierceness, His

followers, following Christ Himself, kept free from society, free from literature, free from art—nay, seemed opposed to them. And yet He promised to guide His Church, and His promise—we believe with confidence—has not failed; and what has followed?

Why, my friends, the Christian Church has embraced, has even *moulded* society; she has created whole worlds of literature; she has inspired and guided art. What Christian but must love his Dante? What Christian but must respect his Shakespeare? And the "Disputa" in the Vatican, the "Last Judgment" at Orvieto, the "San Sisto" at Dresden—to say nothing of Spohr's "Lietzen Dinge," or Bach's "Passionsmusik," or Mendelssohn's "Elijah"—bear witness to a fact, an awful, blessed, and far-reaching fact—that Christianity has *laid hold* on every form of human energy, that Christianity sanctifies every outcome of human effort, that for brain, as well as hand, for thought as well as muscle, the noblest thing for man is toil in this his mortal pilgrimage; that, in fact, according to religion, in the highest sense our life is labour.

And then this view of work, remember, is enhanced when we recall its moral value. For the moral value of work is incalculable. The voice of mankind witnesses to that: "Securus judicat orbis terrarum.

The whole world has felt that there can be no healthy moral life without labour. Virtue, after all, means manly strength. Virtue is not a merely external thing; it is an affair of heart and will. It is in the *heart* and in the will that the will and law of God are neglected or done. But the aspirations of the heart are made practical, and the determinations of the will are braced by the steady *efforts* to do our duty "in that state of life to which"—to use the wise words of the Catechism—"it has pleased God to call us."

Purity, for instance, can never be *created* by activity, any more than any other virtue; and yet it certainly is true that in the difficult but ennobling path of purity, in the manly effort to see to it that the higher nature conquers the lower, that grace purifies desire, that purified desires, under the influence of grace, stimulate the will, that the will rules and is not a slave—a distinct *help*, under God, in keeping the balance of faculties, and in preventing the undue tyranny of lower passions, is unquestionably vigorous toil. Effort and work, and activity—and, in fact, labour—have in this their part to play.

For work, honest work, is a *discipline*. We are born for a higher life. We are travellers journeying, when all is said, to a better country; and so, for God's glory, for the good of our fellows; above all, for that which is *the* thing entrusted to us in view of

an immortal life—for the formation of our own character, for our goodness, and purity, and sincerity, and unselfishness, and truth—work has its part to play. In this high sense, then, life is labour.

Michael Angelo is said to have looked upon a block of marble with the eyes with which we, Christians, should view our own human nature, and the nature of those whom here we may affect. He is said to have declared that in that block of marble an angel was imprisoned, and *he* was called to let him go free. We, too, in our own lives, and also, in our degree and possibility, in the lives of others, are bound to set free the powers of a higher life; and while grace, the grace of God, is *the* force which enables and inspires us, work—the doing loyally our duty under divine guidance and inspiration—is the powerful *means*.

Let us then wake up. Let us labour, then—not "for the meat which perisheth," but—let us "*work* out our own salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that it is God who *worketh* in us," and shows us thereby the dignity of labour.

IX.

One word more, and I have done.

Work was a mark of the life of our Master. There

was, indeed, a solitary greatness in *His* which can scarcely be claimed for ours. He, however, is our example. His was a work all His own ; so is ours. *The* work each one of us is set to do in this world can be done by none other, though others may do *theirs*. His was toned, and ennobled, and sanctified, and coloured by sorrow ; so must be ours. Sorrow is the lot of man. Sorrow, sanctified and glorified by the temper of the Passion of our Master will exalt, and calm, and glorify our toil and struggle. But we are bound to feel as men, as Christians, as followers of the crucified ; that as life is short, and yet supplies a great opportunity ; that as *that* opportunity can come once, once and no more ; that as all real life is made up of activity and suffering, of work and endurance, of what we *do* and what we *bear ;* so, for the advance of the kingdom of God ; so, for the help we may give to those around us ; so, for the right preparation of our own character for the life beyond the grave, we must accept our trial time as a time of toil and a time of suffering ; we must realise, in no morbid, but in a brave and patient spirit, that life is—indeed it is—indeed out of this will appear, in the future, its glory —that life is "labour and sorrow."

THE DUTY OF STRENGTH

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."—Eccl. ix., 10.

THE DUTY OF STRENGTH

THE Book of Ecclesiastes in many ways stands alone. There is a tone about it, a mode of thought, a way of looking at things, a temper and habit of mind, which is scarcely like the rest of Holy Scripture. It deals with broad and deep views of life, as indeed does the rest of the Bible, but, generally, in a less practical and less energetic way. What it says is true, and yet we are not quite sure that it ought to have been said, because, although true, it is very far from being the whole truth. What it says, though true, seems scarcely to have that undertone of courage, and that heart-ring of hopefulness which we have learnt to expect from the Bible. At first approach it sounds *blasé*, and almost weak, and certainly *laissez-faire*. It might do as an expression of a scheme of disappointed philosophy; it might be the utterance of a fairly amiable Schopenhauer; it is scarcely—so we feel—just what we expect in the Word of God. Nature

in all her ways and workings, man in all his purposes and efforts, is—according to this writer—aimless, objectless, purposeless, and of no avail. The world is an insoluble riddle; human life is a pathetic pantomime. "Labour and sorrow" with a vengeance are here; but labour seems a useless expenditure of energy, and sorrow an inevitable misery. Man is the prophet of Nature, and Nature is the creation of cruel Chance.

There is no reason to suppose that the writer of this remarkable book is other than Solomon the king. In one sense it is, doubtless, an expression of his own varied experience. It expresses his conviction of the *emptiness*, in the long run, of the mere possession of vast wealth or the mere acquisition of unusual knowledge. It is not unnatural to expect large results from both, and large results for temporal happiness or comfort certainly there may be; but there is *something* in human life and destiny which they are powerless finally to reach. Both seem of overwhelming force and significance; both go a long way, a very long way, in rounding off the angles and easing the pressure, and softening the asperities of life; but when all is said and done, there remains much in life which defies their ameliorating power. There is a something which has ever impressed the minds

and hearts of men, which brings us all, in every class, on every level, under every circumstance, nearer than at first sight seems possible. The conditions of life do not change: civilisation may advance; progress may be made; fresh uses for things around us may be discovered by man's ingenuity to help man in rendering less trying or more attractive his habitation and his grave. Still, whatever be our vaunted progress, some things do not change.

The conditions of birth do not change—strange, simple, common, painful, full of responsibility, full of sorrow and joy! The conditions of the support of life do not change, implying the simplest elemental necessities which, disguised as they may be, are felt by the noblest and the lowliest born! The conditions of death do not change. No invention, no discovery, no fresh advance in scientific development can ever succeed in finally throwing back the frontier of the grave. These thoughts come home to us in what are our more intimate—I may call them our more *immediate*—moments. All men have, of course, been impressed by them. Solemn and fundamental thoughts are dealt with by different minds in very different ways. Indeed, the *manner* of dealing with fundamental facts may be said to be the test of the character and plan of a mind. The cynic sneers; a

sneer is cheap. Any one, without much expenditure —except the expenditure of moral force and self-control—can easily sneer. The strong hopeless man *accepts* the facts, and tries, notwithstanding these, to do his duty. His, however, is a form of "shortened thought." It is, of course, right and brave and sterling, under whatever difficulties, to bear and do; but there is always an element of cowardice in despair. The heartless, the careless, the conceited, the refined, may all find it worth their while to dwell upon the same aspect of human struggle in a tone of lofty or dignified despondency. There is a certain sentimentality in certain kinds of unbelief which is scarcely less repulsive than the flimsiness of maudlin sentiment.

This is certainly not the predominant feeling of this very remarkable book. It recognises to the utmost what all *must* recognise who think at all of things *as they are*—the terrible irony of life. Indeed, before us all is the heart-rending spectacle of *waste*. We see the love that has no response; the labour that seems to reap no reward; the aspirations which end in unsatisfied longings; the successes which are worse than failures; and the failures which crown effort, and seem the forecasts of irremediable ruin. We all know something of the dreams which break in chilly daylight, and the deep and heart-searching

affections which seem made only to give emphasis to death. Life is full of these things. This book, however—if we scan it narrowly—is not a poem of despair. It acknowledges such facts; it comes from the pen of one who *felt* them in his very being; and yet beyond and above them there is before the writer's eyes a fairer vision. Life without God he has learnt, and he insists, is emptiness; life with God is a very different matter. If *he* could see it, feel it, teach it, how much more we who are Christians! To face facts is an act of wisdom; to face facts is a mark of courage; but having taken facts all round in life as it stands before us, what remains as a serious and exacting duty? This, my friends, this—*the duty of strength*. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

I.

The Church, as you know, has been before now accused of the sin of "other-worldliness." If the Church has sinned in this way, she is, at any rate, in good company! She can claim as her companions the Bible and Christ. Further, it is not a sin of which men are widely guilty. The odd thing is, when we come to think of it, how men and women go their way, and work their work, and carry on their usual conversation as if there were no God; as if

the world had made itself. It has been said by a great teacher, speaking of a remote and religious corner of the world: "It is a solemn and awful sight to see a whole population, visibly and by habit religious, believing in God, and instinctively showing their belief all day long and in all possible circumstances. . . . . The sight . . . . is very subduing to those who have lived where nothing but the present world is assumed and referred to in the forms and language of ordinary society; where society is ever silent about God, and nothing that they do or say in their usual business implies His existence. To such persons the perpetual recognition of His name and power, so uniformly and often so unexpectedly, is like an evidence to the senses —a result and warning of the nearness of His presence."

This is beautiful. "Other-worldliness" is not so common that we can afford to disregard it or sneer at it where indeed it is. The Church, let us remember, is wrong; she has failed in her mission; she is forgetting her *métier*, her proper work, if, above all, she is not *other-worldly*.

II.

But there *are* interests in this time of probation; there *are* capacities in human nature which Chris-

tianity must recognise, which, indeed, the Church alone—just in proportion as she is "other-worldly"—can recognise, which belong to this life. This life is of importance; our human interests and capacities are of vast significance, just because it is the vestibule of another, just because there is a life beyond the grave. Who can seriously doubt that all our labour and sorrow under the sun is really and in the long run valuable, because it forms a character which shall tell through unmeasured ages, when Time shall be no more? Brethren, let us not be deluded by the merely external show of things. Here we are bribed into appraising things by their effects at the moment, and the appearance they have! Some men, certainly, have greater opportunities and graver temptations than others; but in the clear light of truth, which is the light of Eternity, this little masquerade is soon over! Little it matters whether you have been a Prime Minister, a Lord Chancellor, an Emperor, an M.P., a church dignitary, a popular orator, or a railway porter, or a newspaper lad; little it matters whether your external trappings have been striking or mean; but much it matters —oh! so much (*that* is the "other-worldly" teaching of the Church)—*how* you have borne yourself in them; with what truth, what purity, what freedom from self-seeking, what unselfishness, what

fear of God! These things matter enormously. Living as we do in a condition of things which implies that each of us must stand before the Son of Man, *the* one important thing is, not the details of our actions, about which the world is so busy, but the character which is being formed by our bearing in relation to those details, which is the one real preparation for that tremendous future that lies before us all.

Well, then, life means labour; life, I submit, means sorrow; life, above all, is probation.

These *are* important interests, important questions, important capacities, which have to do with *this* world; but their deep importance is—say what you will—that this world must be viewed in close connection with another; and to deal with them not in a shallow way, but with earnestness; not in a flimsy fashion, but with the reality to be expected from men; not with mere sentiment, but with seriousness—what (among other things), you must not be forgetful of—oh! let me beseech you to remember it—is *the duty of strength*.

III.

What, then, do I mean by strength? "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." There is the wise man's exhortation, and what does

he mean? By "strength"—I mean, by "strength" I think, *he* means—which is more to the purpose—the deliberate gathering up, concentration, utilising of *force*.

The human mind can never be unfamiliar with such a thought as this. One of the stateliest of the dramas of cultivated Athens has familiarised the student—in a moment of pathetic sorrow—with the idea of personified and vigorous *force*. But it needs no illusion of the stage, it needs no electric power of genius, to make our minds familiar with a fact like that, with which we are so entirely at home. Have we never listened to the wind which moans so low, so low among the grasses, and heard it rise till it sings its *psithurisma* in the pine woods, and increase till it raves and screams in threatening storm? Have we never felt the fierce waves of the ocean tower to mountain heights of horror? or sink to depths of equal dread beneath the struggling ship, toiling and fighting, and lashed, and tormented by the storm? Have we never watched the crazy clouds, driven and whirled and torn to ribbons, flying through the open heaven, or wandering helpless before the pitiless fury of the gale? Have we never stood on the wind-swept headland, and listened to the roar of the suffering ocean, or felt the fierceness of the rushing tempest, and been deafened by its "power of sound"? If

we have—if wind and wave, if cloud and shrieking blast, if surging spray and tormented billows have filled our hearts and ears with awful, mystic, overwhelming music, we have learned that we, frail things, are in a world where *force*—unfathomable immeasurable, overwhelming—is a fact with which we have to deal.

Then, think of the electric current. Since this world was, there have been everywhere the mysterious component parts of these energetic activities which now, by the help of Science, we have reduced to the condition of domestic servants. The mysterious power of generating electric conditions has always *been*. Now, we men know how to bring that power to bear, and what before was widespread or unproductive by reason of an absence of concentration or application, is now reduced to terms and conditions of practical utility. But here is *a force*, and, what is more, here are the means of using it to high purpose and for real results.

Think, again, of mechanical enterprise. Nothing can strike the imagination more, in this department of human industry, than the astonishing energy of those great engineers in the city of the West by whose vigour the population is supplied with the water needed for their ordinary wants.

Michigan stretches away from Chicago into dim and

mysterious distances, as Corinth or Sparta looks out upon the Ægean sea. A sea, it seems—by reason of the grey horizon frontier, though we call it a great lake—with its sudden and destructive storms, its changes of rising and falling temperature, its alternations of deep or flashing colours; and, when the stern grip of winter has seized upon its waters, its motionless billows, of beautiful and cruel ice. Here, amidst the wild rush of American life, among the vigorous constructors of a hasty civilisation, almost too swift to think, almost too headlong to calculate, almost too impulsive to meditate or be calm; here, with such mixture of all that is eager and energetic and living, and much that is, alas! perhaps unbalanced and unrestrained—steadily, like the rise and fall of the wind, or the breaking and setting of the day—the four tremendous engines, outcome of human invention and human need, keep pumping up their hundred thousand (or is it million?) gallons of water a minute, for the use of the great city, from the depth of the great lake. Here is *force*, and force subdued by the application of law and mind.

Or think again of the marvels of genius. One man speaks to you, writes to you, instructs you, and the result of such intercourse on your mind and character is *nil*. Another, perhaps at the moment, perhaps with a voice from out of the distant ages,

carries to you thoughts and teachings, which not only arrest your attention, but become part of yourself They enter into your character; they make you other than, without them, you would have been. Here is force. The world is full of forces. To concentrate them, to apply them, to bring them to bear for some real purpose, *that* is everything. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

Brethren, in the history of our inner being, in our treatment of our own souls—our own selves—there is need as there is possibility of the use of forces, well applied. Whatever be true as to the explanation of the shattered, or at least impaired, condition of human nature, one thing we know by sad experience, that there are forces of evil which tend to its destruction. Who does not know the mysterious power of temptation? No one, I suppose, deliberately seeks what he believes to be evil. The soul of man is too great for that. It is *good* we are longing for, but there are two dangers of a perverted nature: (1) to seek what we believe to be good, when, in fact, for us it is evil; (2) to seek good, but to seek it in a wrong way. This comes, as we know, from the exercise of free will. Whatever be the mysterious difficulty of *arranging* the relation of free-will and omnipotence, something in ourselves tells us this—it is an *ultimate* thought, beyond it we cannot go—

that Love, to be worth the name, must be the act of free choice, that if we are free to choose the highest, we must also be free to choose all that is most opposed to it, and that if this be true there *must* be attractions tending to draw us away from what is best—in other words, for a free being, for an intelligent being, for a being with affections to whose choice is offered the highest good, there *must* be, for the formation of character, the force of *temptation.*

Temptation! Here, indeed, is a force; and how gradually it comes and acts. Is it not true that the first thing is to familiarise the mind with the idea that God can be hard? Are we not led first to feel that He—who is all goodness—may be a little *unfair?* You know, as well as I can tell you, how often this thought has come. "Did I bring myself into the world?" "Did I create my own circumstances?" "Did I invent my own passions?" And so on. Is it not again and again the fundamental temptation, the *beginning* of the attraction of evil, which comes in such thoughts as these? How do we meet this? Brethren, there are other fundamental thoughts. Among them the utter, the unutterable beauty of *goodness.* We meet this by *force*, by the force of a soul which sees that, whatever be the difficulties of life to a finite understanding, utter goodness there must be, and He who represents

that cannot do wrong. We meet it by remembering that to form the character in goodness is the work we have been given to do; that that which our "hand findeth to do" is no child's play, that the fierce force of the beginning of temptation must be met with a force which is at least its equal, that a reasoned conviction and an energetic will are needed by those who are disciples in the school of the Blessed, that we must "with our might" resist temptation in its beginnings; that in the very openings of the moral life, strength is a duty.

We know, alas! by sad experience how temptation goes on. There is the tendency to *dwell* on the pleasant side of giving way, and to exaggerate the difficulty of holding out. God's commands are added to and made oppressive in our imaginations. We leave the pure atmosphere of truth, and cast around our actions and our probations an imaginative atmosphere which throws out of proportion all with which we have to do. How much of the hostility to that noblest of all stately things - Religion – is *created* by our own corrupted imagination! Vice may be easy, and virtue may be hard; vice may be drifting with the current, and virtue swimming manfully against the stream; but deep down in the soul there is the sense, the real sense, that virtue is beautiful and grand and

Godlike, and that vice is hideous and bad. It is the *bribed* imagination, it is the selfish tendency to dwell upon an exaggerated view of the exactions of God's law; it is the miserable willingness to make the most of difficulty in withstanding, and to make the most of pleasure in succumbing, which forms the second stage in temptation. And here, brethren, here, what is it that is needed? If we have set our hand to conquer the tempter, we have found a work to do for our own souls, so that *they* at least shall be straight and true—here strength is a duty. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

IV.

"Labour and sorrow"! Such is life. So far, we are dealing with them as things of the soul. Life for the soul, then, is made up of temptation and resistance or surrender. Think, now, of a further illustration of this great duty in our life of "labour and sorrow." One thing which may check us, and rightly check us, in a course of sin, is the thought of the consequences. This is not a high morality, but it has its value. Philosophers who stand on stilts and sneer at Christian teaching are never tired of warning you that "it is not

for nothing that a Christian tries to do right." Very well; accept their sneer. You must take human nature as it is, and the difference—so it seems to me—between Christians and these somewhat censorious critics is that the former, if weak, are real; the latter if lofty—pardon the expression—are pretentious, are untrue. It *is* true. The Christian revelation *does* hold out as a motive the avoidance of destruction, the avoidance of "going to hell." It may not be the highest motive. It is a real one. And the moment you think of what hell means—separation from good men, separation from God, separation from all that is noblest and best—then the motive is *not* an ignoble motive, and as to your apostles of "the Revolution" who sneer at it, and as to your high-talking unbelievers who deny, I am sorry for their insincerity, and I am tempted to hold them—as you may fairly hold all who are false men—I am tempted to hold them in contempt! "To escape hell" is a real motive, and not a bad motive. Thank God, if *that* moves you, or me, if nothing else will; still, the *fear of consequences* is not the noblest morality; as temptation creeps on, it is put forward as *the* one thing; but certainly, if it is the only thing, then indeed in the long run the soul will not stand. To meet temptation, to *back up* any fear of consequence, if that fear is to be of any moral value

at all, you need—indeed you need—a deeper sense of things. Your character, your permanent form of purpose is at stake. *That* your hand has to work upon. "Whatsoever your hand findeth to do, *do* it with your might." Your duty—yes, your duty—as temptation goes on, is not to rest only in fear of consequences; your duty is strength.

v.

But further two thoughts of the Christian revelation bring this duty home. It is not merely that sentimental dreaming as to our sad condition and almost necessary failure is discredited by facts, so that we are ashamed of ourselves as Christians, if we are clouded by the persuasion of Schopenhauer, or weakened by the despairing dirges of Heine. It is not merely that we feel the force of the contention that, as in Nature—I mean material Nature—so in moral being there must be forces which can be, and therefore ought to be, brought into play. It is not only that temptation in its beginning and its advance is so clearly a power—and a necessary power—for the formation of character, which must be met by corresponding powers; but beyond all this—granted that our *first* responsibility is our own soul; granted that—first of all—man

is an artist working at himself; granted that dexterity is needed, and training, and watchfulness, and effort; still it remains that to concentrate and apply *force* on all proper occasions and at all proper points is THE fulfilment of human function; in other words, that what the hand finds to do it must do with its might; or, in fact, that strength is a duty.

This, brethren, I say, in a life of "labour and sorrow," is made possible, is illustrated, is relieved of its apparent hardness, in its exacting demands by two great truths of the Christian revelation.

1. It was a new thing to the world—I will not say coming only from Christianity, but at least from direct revelation—that we may *love God.*

The most striking feature in the Hebrew Psalms is this strange strand—which runs throughout them—of love for God. Other collections of religious poetry—great teachers have reminded us—have embodied man's thoughts on the vastness and awfulness of Nature; on the mystery of an apparently predominant will; on the startling contrasts and terrible anomalies of human life; but *these* sacred poems alone are expressions of a passionate longing of the soul for its Creator, of an entire devotion to His will, of a sense of peace in union with Him, and only then. Here the eye of man seems to pierce the veil as never

before, and see the "beautiful things made new for the delight of the sky children"; here first comes in sight *the love of God.*

But after all this was mere poetical dreaming in comparison to what was to be—Christ the Master came, and we know the revolution He has effected in character and history. What was that? You can answer by gazing steadily at the history of the early Church. You can answer it by tracking the life-path of "such a one as Paul the Aged," "the slave of Jesus Christ." You can answer by listening to the heart-throbs of the martyrs. You can answer by looking at such a life as that of St. Francis, or reading such a book as "The Imitation." You can feel a new thing has come into the world, or an old thing, so transfigured, so illuminated, so developed, so ennobled, that it is practically new. You can answer, here was created *a character*, a real substantial, tangible, evident thing in the ranks of human life and in the records of human history. Here a real force has been at work, and it has been used and put to proof, and made to fulfil its function, and no man can doubt its existence, for no man can deny evident results. Here, since Christ came, are new habits of thought, new governing motives, new imperious ideas—principles of action strong and self-asserting, showing themselves in a real

character. Since Christ came—however much the term has been abused—there has been before the eyes of men that assemblage of qualities seen in human life which makes a Christian! Of course, dear friends, in this is comprehended strong faith and high moral purpose, and a deep and practical sense of the unseen; but above all, there is the result of that new force. Here is the outcome of an intimate sense of the real bond existing between the soul and God; the *sense* that man is dear, most dear, to God; the *sense* that God—seen in Christ Jesus, seen to be what He is, no longer misunderstood, but seen and known—could be dear, most dear to man; the sense that God, and He alone, as seen in Christ, can satisfy the longings of the human heart—which, with all its aberrations, can respond to the greatest love of all—this force, this sense, all has acted to create Christian character.

Ah, brethren! as it was, so it is. If the heart be opened to that mightiest of mighty motives, the *Love of God*, then there is a new force in human life, powerful enough to withstand many an onslaught of the fiercest temptation. Love, after all, is a *personal* matter. We never really love *things; persons* alone we love. You can stand and withstand: you can work and suffer, and even die, if the stimulus for action or the stimulus for endur-

ance comes from a great love; and in the mystic arena of the spiritual life, where battles the severest and most deadly are fought out to severe conclusions, if strength be a duty, if we are to "do with our might" that which indeed we "find to do," then, let us remember, no effort is foolish or futile which is made to throw open our understanding, our heart, or will, to that mighty energy, "the love of God."

Brethren, this love of God, "shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost," gives a tenderness and power to Christian character. It is a duty to open the mind to the beauty of goodness, the beauty of God. It is a duty to allow ourselves to see the fearfulness of wilfully abandoning the highest. It is a duty to endeavour to realise the gravity of wilful and persistent sin as leading the soul away from the great love. It is a duty to allow the play of the motives of holy fear hindering us from evil and warning us of danger. The sweet side and the solemn side of religion are closely related. It is a duty to be strong. Do not shrink, then, from looking sin in the face in all its fearful consequences; do not shrink from doing so in the light of the tenderness and self-devotion of Jesus Christ.

Since penalties so fearful
Thou dost to sin award,
How can our heart be cheerful,
How can we love thee, Lord?

Because Thou still art gracious,
Lord, even in Thine ire,
Round blissful Heaven spacious
It is protective fire.

Fear makes our souls the fitter
To prize Thy love and thee;
For if the curse be bitter
Sweet must the blessing be;
Oh, sweet to hear Thee saying,
"Peace, heart, be ever still;"
Oh! sweet the full obeying
Of Thine eternal will.

To Thee our heart is crying
Amid deceiving sin,
And worldly fears defying
The faith that rules within.
We from estranging error
Our love to Thee would guard;
To us the chiefest terror
Is lest we lose thee, Lord.

Yes, holy fear and real charity combine. We must exert them both, we must look up in fear and charity to the Holiest and Most Blessed. The love of God is a motive of prevailing energy. It is—in the stimulating efficacy of it—our duty to be strong,

2. And then—which indeed is involved in this—there is the grace of God. When the Christian talks of the grace of God he does not merely use a pious phrase, or imply that it is possible for man to enjoy God's favour. "Favour" with God, it is truly said, is no mere passing mood of mind or disposition,

it implies a substantial gift. Grace is essentially a divine power which makes us God's children and inheriters of His kingdom. It is a gift freely given, and of a supernatural character, coming from God for the merits of Him who is head of our race—the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ—and meant to promote our salvation. It is then a real force, but of a higher range than any created power, and is nothing short of a communication to the soul, of the Divine Nature itself. We have no power to merit in any sense whatever the full gift of grace. It is true indeed, in a sense, that the following gifts are merited by holy obedience and good works, but these very Christian excellences which draw down further gifts are themselves the outcome of the first unmerited blessing. So that the saying of St. Augustine is true: "Since it is by grace alone that every good work of ours is wrought in us, where God crowns our merits, He crowns nothing but His own gifts." The source of this blessed force is the Divine Nature, is God, but the meritorious cause is our Blessed Redeemer, Jesus Christ. He, by the merits of His perfect obedience, has obtained grace for the Church, His body, and all the members in particular, and the agent who administers this power—such is the teaching of the Catholic Faith—is the Holy Ghost. This power is the very

principle of a new life in us. Begun here, it is, if we will, completed in glory, by the gradual re-formation in us of the image of God, marred by the Fall.

This power, therefore, is necessary for our salvation. Without it we can do nothing ; with it we can do anything. By it, and it alone, can we exercise Faith and Hope and Love. By it and it alone can we have true sorrow for sin, and a real spiritual grasp of the merits of Jesus Christ. By it and it alone can we hold communion with God and faithfully persevere. Helpless and poor indeed we are without it ; by it we may be "more than conquerors through Him who loved us."

For, it is true, while having thus to look up to Him from whom all strength comes, thus to lean on Him who *can* support, and is willing to help and able to save, we must not, dear friends, forget the mystery of our being, the reality of our own responsibility, and the need of a real effort. Men have argued and debated—and heresies have been born of debate and argument -on the question of reconciling divine grace and free will. We need not spend our strength on discovering mysteries the full reach and range of which we cannot know until we "know as we are known" : but it is our duty to act on what we *do* know now. Free, supernatural, tremendous in its province, coming to us for the merits of our

Redeemer, needed for our salvation as grace is—it still remains true that we are not mere passive instruments, not mere soulless machines; that grace is given to us that we may act accordingly, given to us to enable us to keep God's commandments, and to "do those things which are well pleasing in His sight." We are bound to co-operate with the help given to us. "By the grace of God," we may, like the great Apostle, "labour abundantly"; without God's grace we cannot do it; but it is *we* who have to do it after all. It is a true saying: "God commands not impossibilities, but while commanding He warns us to do what we can, and gives us help that we may have power so to do."

To respond, then, to grace given; to act faithfully on the inspirations and teachings which God gives, and not merely to follow the impulses of nature, is the first and most serious of duties—for on this depends our salvation, and indeed the degree of attainment in the life of glory.

We know, dear friends, that mistakes of a serious character have been made in different directions on this subject. The Pelagians so exalted human nature as to deny the existence or action of the grace of God. We English, with our strong self-reliant characters, have been said to be by disposition semi-Pelagians; and there is some truth in

the saying. The neglect of appointed prayer, the abandonment of the sacraments of the Church, or the depreciation of their importance—too common, alas! among us as a people—proceed from an insufficient sense of the necessity and power of the grace of God.

Then, again, another apparent mistake has before now affected the minds of men. Free will has been practically denied, and man reduced to the condition of a mere automaton, who can, therefore, have no sort of responsibility because no opportunity for choice. Both are wrong. The human soul rises in revolt against both. The Catholic Faith teaches that both are erroneous, and errors of a serious character, tending to lead men to pride and neglect of duty, *or else* to fatalism and despair. We have a force to help us, and without it we are helpless indeed. We are free to employ this force or free to neglect.

> Our wills are ours, we know not how;
> Our wills are ours to make them Thine!

We have to act in the majesty and seriousness of a freedom which implies responsibility; we have never to forget how we depend on the grace of God.

VI.

It is then, brethren, our *duty* to be strong. If we honestly think out the crises of life; if we face and value the forces arrayed against us, and take the measure of our own conduct, it is impossible for us to pretend that where we fell, we *could not* have stood our ground, or when we looked towards the attractions of iniquity we *could not* have looked the other way.

Dear friends, we are often too easy with ourselves. Our powers of self-deception are quite unlimited. We are adepts at excuses, and ingenious at evasions if it comes to a question of our own temptations. Surely a good rule in a time of such temptation, of such perplexity, and yet of such abundant opportunity for better things, is—to be generous in our judgment of others, and large in our allowance for their difficulties, and willing—in their case—to make all possible excuses, but with ourselves to be strict; on ourselves to be severe.

Life indeed may be full of trial. Life, in a very true sense is "labour and sorrow"; but life is a great opportunity for forming character, a great training-ground for a glorious future; and as we have the forces so abundantly placed at our disposal, so most certainly for all of us it is a *duty* to be strong.

THE TEACHING OF DISCIPLINED THOUGHT

"We do not war according to the flesh . . . . casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."—2 Cor. x. 3. 5.

THE TEACHING OF DISCIPLINED THOUGHT

HERE the Apostle is realising the power and seriousness of Thought. Here also he expresses his sense at once of the duty and difficulty of bringing it into proper discipline. Yet this, brethren, is part of the work of life. It is a shallow philosophy which treats the work of the hands as being the only "labour." There is also—and no kind of labour is more exacting—the work of the brain. But more; every kind of work to be effective must be under discipline, must be in order, and no department of man's activity surely needs the guidance of rigorous discipline more than the energy of the mind. "Bringing every thought"—such is the Apostle's searching statement—"bringing every thought into the obedience of Christ." Let us ask ourselves to-day whither wisely-disciplined thought leads us in two matters of grave importance?

I.

Where does it lead us, in the first place, in the great question of the *existence* of God, and, by consequence, up to a certain point, in our possibility of knowing Him?

Brethren, I pause to observe that this is not an abstract or an unpractical or a merely academic question. The age we life in, with all its apparent flimsiness, with all its levity, with all its lighthearted way of dealing with questions of the greatest gravity, is, after all, an age, *au fond*, not wanting in gravity. Men have gone down to the deepest things. They have asked, sometimes with earnest yearning, sometimes in a strange despair, "Where is now thy God?" External nature has been ransacked, dissected, divided, placed in compartments, and labelled for use. The *cui bono*, "Where's the use of it?" is the cry of the time. The sweet strange light of other years is gone; the pearly gray of the faint whispering morning, the tender flush of the breaking day, these are gone; but with them also have gone much stumbling and tripping and making of cruel mistakes. We have lost something; we have gained much. It seems to me the worst is on the outside. We have the noise of the world and the screech of the crowd, and the necessary shallow and hasty utterances, perhaps

vulgarities of the newspapers; but underneath, I am sure, men are in earnest. They are less brutal, less fierce, less—on the whole—unfair. They are *looking* deep even when their knowledge is shallow. There is plenty to sadden; there always will be in this sad world; but there is also much to gladden. A cry for *truth* is always a fine sign. A real longing for *light* is always the evidence of a reviving soul. We have many faults and many failings; we are children of much that is shallow, or unreal, or pretentious, or even wrong; but in spite of our effort to be comfortable and get along without any sign or sense of eternity, there *is* in our age, as perhaps there never was before—I am convinced of it—a longing for God.

If, then, we are honest labourers, if we accept life as labour, if amidst the labours supplied by life we realise the duty of labouring thought, what does *thought*, if rightly trained and disciplined, say as to the *existence* of God? And here we are venturing to enter into the sanctuary of man's inmost self. No longer are we wrangling in the hot *piazza* on the proofs of a presence in the temple; we have ascended the steps; we have crossed the threshold; we have entered the sanctuary; we only want to gaze and contemplate and pray. Is there or is there not a Divine Presence? Does thought rebuke the

wayward longing of the soul? Is it only the echo of the phantom in Richter's dream: "Children, ye have no father"? Or does it, when well ordered and disciplined, whisper: "Go so far as this, there *is* a God; go a step further, *you* can know Him"?

Well, brethren, we know that, on the whole, men are divided into those who *observe* and those who *reflect*. This is so, and yet it is also true that observation does not wholly exclude reflection in any mind, or the reverse. The strange thing is that, face to face with Nature, man first and almost exclusively *observes—almost*, but not entirely. Nature, whatever be the explanation of it, is unquestionably idealised by man. This is done in different degrees, of course, by men on different levels of culture; but there it is, it *is* done. It is not so much mass of vaporous substance, or so many tons of water set in motion by so many tons of wind, or so much electric fluid ignited, which moves, as it always has moved, and awes or delights or terrifies man. It is not so many waves of air proceeding at different pitches, what we call sound; it is not so many waves of ether producing in different degrees of radiance what we call light, that strike the heart with ecstasy, with delight, through ear and eye! No, not so. There is something *beyond*, something *behind* all this.

It were a clumsy explanation of a moving fact to say that so much physical displacement of material substance thrilled the heart with delirium of delighting or filled the eyes with tears. Brethren, we feel it ; there is *something* behind, beyond. Man can idealise Nature, whatever that may mean. What does it mean ?

Well, whatever it means, dear friends, it is anyhow a mark of our enormous spiritual power. It opens up to us a fund of mental resources almost inexhaustible. We have fallen to the deepest depths of degradation ; and you feel it too, if you can succeed in treating Nature as a mere dead *thing*—so much stone, so much carbon, so much liquid, so much air. Your natural philosophers may dissect and lecture as they please ; you *can't*—while a spark of your better self is still left in you—you *can't* accustom yourself to treat it all like that.

The sunset has still for you its glow of glory ; for you is still the heart-moving the pathetic splendour of the dawn. The soft winds still are whispering quietude and tenderness ; the greater forces of your soul are still responsive to the storm. Still, the sweet fragrance of the flowers brings tender joy ; still, there is soothing in the soft showers and pleasant sundown of the springtide, and sadness in the glow of glory on the autumn woods ; still the

wheeling rooks and rising winds and moan and trouble of the sobbing sea carry their messages of love and sorrow and of far away; still solemn teachings come in every roll of thunder, and deep unspoken thoughts in the rise and falling of the uncertain wind; still pine-trees murmur their unmatched, their *psithurisma* music; still, the calm starlight brings its unmeasured longings, or the wide expanse of prairie or the empty sky; still, "sweet and low" the winds are sighing, and hearts, heartsick with noise and fuss and worry, can find in Nature sympathetic whispers which only here and there among the few who love unselfishly are heard from man.

What is it? Read the riddle as you please, give it a hundred meanings if you like—*Man gives a meaning to Nature, believing there is behind Nature, a life not all unlike his own.*

II.

The moment this is acknowledged, the opponents of religion ticket it as *anthropomorphism*, and so think they have discredited any witness that Nature can give. "What does it all mean?" they say. "You hear voices in the winds, and feel awe and wonder at the sight of gathering clouds or at the heat, now light, now steam, now invisible electric

sound of the threatening sea ; you are only throwing forward your own shadow and taking it for an active giant not all unlike yourself. This is the old trick of early civilisation. You ought to have grown out of it now. Talk of God ! You mean fancy ! Talk of a life behind phænomena ! you mean a creation of your dreams !" That, dear friends, is the answer of scientific unbelief, and until you have listened to it —or the philosophic unbelief which is its twin brother— until you have patiently sat in the school of your unbelieving material or moral philosophers, you have never known what are the boundless capacities of credulity, what are the fathomless abysses of scientific and philosophic superstition. When men talk in this way of *anthropomorphism*, they are mere dupes of superstition ; just as Heathens worship a fetish or extreme Protestants worship the text of the Bible, so these worship a word.

There *is* no other way of judging except by the capacities with which we are ourselves endowed. We see before us a vast range of phænomena. Our endowment of common-sense teaches us at once that these cannot be self-created. You turn to our learned scientist, and he discourses on *matter*, on its indestructibility, on its many transformations, and so on ; he discourses on *force*, on its chameleon-like changes—now

current—ever powerful though ever variable. You ask him about the origin of all the mass of curious and beautiful phænomena before you; he informs you that *force* applied to *matter* explains it all. You are naturally alarmed, for it sounds as if—according to the usual scientific instinct—he were concealing his ignorance by using *words*. Why, you ask again, this exquisite *order?* Why this harmony of things, so perfect that none can detect a flaw? Why this rising and setting of the Pleiades, and the movement of the belt of Orion? Why the regulated journeying of swift uncontrollable light? Why the sequence of seasons, the rise and fall of tides, the evidently regulated relation of things with a gravitation or attraction that none can alter, but all can observe? What answer can he give? One only—*Chance!* You are startled at the folly, the unfathomable folly, of this unbelief. You had imagined there was knowledge behind all this shouting, and sincere and careful discoveries behind this scorn! And this is the end! A being with a mind like yourself is invited by these great masters of the latest form of superstition to consider that all you see is the product of *matter* acted upon by *force*, under the guidance of *chance*, and that if you *feel* the mystery of Nature and listen to the hundred voices, you are --poor dreamer—throwing forward your shadow on

this hideous desert, and then trying to imagine it is a living soul!

Such, brethren, is the teaching of the most modern form of superstition, which masquerades under the semblance of knowledge, but is in fact scientific or philosophic unbelief. Is it to this we shall trust ourselves? Can we learn anything from this blind guide as to the reason of things? We may say, paraphrasing Socrates in the "Meno," "We desire to attain that wisdom and virtue by which men order the State or the house and honour their parents, and know when to receive and when to send away citizens and strangers as a good man should. Now, to whom ought we to go in order to learn this virtue?" Shall we go to your scientific and philosophic unbelievers? Shall we speak with them of Matter and Force and Chance as the beginning and middle and end of all? Shall we find a fulcrum in this for a lever of life and a motive power of duty? Or can we not fulfil the duty of labour in the realms of thought under the guidance of Religion, and come nearer the cause and origin of things?

Brethren, we can. The world within us, sense and reason tell us, corresponds with the world without. To be a traitor to Reason is to be untrue to ourselves, and that, remember, is the last disloyalty. What do you *know* yourself to be? You

know yourself to be *a cause*. It is no use arguing that here you are in the realm of the mysterious. Doubtless you are, but you are not less in the realm of fact. You live in a world of mystery, for mystery is truth "half revealed and half concealed," and that is precisely what you are and what you have to do with every day. Your mind is so constituted that it not only can receive but can take practical action upon *mysterious truth*. How about Time, and Space, and Infinity, and Multiplicity, and so on—do these words not express mysterious truths? And do they not also express facts and ideas which enter into our daily practical responsibility. So with *cause*. However mysterious it may be, embracing all the mystery of free will—*there it is*. It represents a true and practical idea. You know yourself to be *a cause;* yes, and *by the very constitution of your mind* you cannot imagine *uncaused* phænomena. Far from being a fool in your *anthropomorphism*, you are a man of common-sense. Nature *must* have behind it a thinking mind. God, in other words, must be everywhere. In other words, *think;* labour to discipline and use your thought; do not allow imagination or prejudice to carry you off your feet; and the result is, you do not act upon the principles of a lunatic asylum, which might lead you to a merely "scientific view" of the world; you are brought back to common-

sense and reason, you are forced to a religious view of Nature, you are driven to—God.

III.

Objections, however, come thick and fast.

Science raises her eyebrows and smiles a supercilious smile. We are warned to remember that the old days of theology are over. Once she had a narrow little world of her own making, and also a tiny era of her own extending. Now, science has changed all that, now we have boundless Space, now we have illimitable Time. All very well in the old nutshell of a world, all very well in the old cramped compendium of years, in which theologians dreamt to find a reflex of their own tiny powers of conception —to find their God. But now? Why, the universe sweeps away under the action of revealing science into infinite myriads of stretches of space, into infinite stretches of cycles of time.

Now you are to think of extensions of space so enormous that the brain reels in endeavouring to bring them into any formula which may express them within the compass of human thought. Can you find the Personal God you are looking for in that unbounded that infinite arena of an illimitable world? Now not your few thousand years since the

first parents wandered in their innocence, wandered and fell, but cycles and ages through which in slow and awful evolution Nature (including *you*) took the shape it at this moment has. Can you find your Personal God there? "Give it up," says Science. Close your eyes, lest your brain gets giddy; think of your old theology as a touching, childish, pretty dream. Realise facts—the vastness of this unmeasured, immeasurable space—the far-extent of this illimitable time; then all becomes Matter, Force, and Law and Chance. You can't pretend to find a Personal God.

IV.

"Bringing every thought into the dominion of Christ"—why not? Shall we not say, Bring every thought into the dominion of sound, religious, serious common-sense, and then scientific and philosophic superstition ceases to enthral, and we find instead scientific and philosophic wisdom. For what is the difficulty? Brethren, as usual when science tries to enter the domain of theology, it is a difficulty of imagination, not of reason. The scientific imagination is the mother of modern superstition. The vastness of space may be true, and the vastness of time. So much of it rests on imaginative speculation that we are bound to be careful, and to accept

"scientific" conclusions with some reserve. But they may be true; if so, they are not too much for *our* minds to contemplate or argue from. Are they too much for God?

The lines of the "David" in the Piazza of Florence are delicately chiselled, as are the lines of the "Moses" in the San Pietro in Vincouli in Rome. The colouring of the "Assumption" at Venice is unique, is superb. The expression in the eyes of the "San Sisto" at Dresden is unmatched in the delineation of any human face. Could it be seriously contended that *therefore*—so infinite, so matchless the art—no living mind could be supposed to have conceived, no living hand to have executed such things?

Space is boundless, Time is almost infinite, the growth of things slow and perfect, the development by slow and progressive degrees; not in a leap, but by an infinite expenditure of care, this vast strange world was shaped and fashioned. Then, what? Therefore no fashioner—such is "scientific" logic; *therefore* God—such is religious thought.

The fact is, that imagination, wonderful as it is as a gift to human nature, has its great and serious dangers. It is a mother of mistakes, and it is the home of fear. To discipline it in moral and spiritual matters is one of the chief functions of holy hope; to subdue it in questions of religious evidence is the

duty of disciplined thought. Scientific unbelief has its strength in imagination; in reason it finds no support at all. It is silly to be frightened out of religious reverence by the *scale* of things. Our senses acquaint us with an outer world of varying and beautiful phænomena; from these objects of sense we rise into consciousness of real facts; from facts examined, correlated, grouped and questioned, reason points to the prevalence of law, and observing laws and finding their harmonious interworking, thought leads us up—according to the analogy of our personal selves (the *only* experience, remember, which we have to go upon)—leads up to *cause*, to one First Cause, and that First Cause, like us ourselves—for no other ultimate cause is known to us—a living mind; in other words—to God. Here you have thought, not trailed, as "materialistic science" trails it, in the dust, tied to the chariot-wheels of unrestrained imagination, but disciplined and guided by the training of common-sense, and therefore free. "Bring every thought into the obedience of Christ."

v.

Ah! brethren, let us remember—so great we are, so wonderful, so born for higher and for better things—that this is true. *Persons* we can love, *things* never.

If we appear to love a thing, it is because around it there is thrown the memory or association of an actual life. You treasure the rose-leaf because it was given you by a dear dead hand. You guard that faded ribbon or that little worn-out shoe because once it had adorned a form which expressed to you a life dearer than your own. That curl of hair—which now in opening out alone the little secret drawer, draws tears down your cheek in the still solitude of the holy sympathetic night—once marked the head which guarded a soul that clasped your soul.

Mystery of human love!—the fairest, deepest thing in this sad world—never yet could it clasp mere things; it touches persons. And where that love goes out to meet the glowing sunset or the starry sky, the grey-green olives wandering down the hillside or the blue translucent water sleeping far below, it is because behind them and beyond them is a heart that beats for man's heart, and a love, not all inhuman, such as human love can be. In this strange world love is answering back to love, and thought to thought. Man—when he *thinks* what this *must* mean—is answering back to God.

Ah! believe me, the purer in heart we are the more earnest in desire for truth, the keener in the sense of real beauty, the more determined to restrain mere

human pride and the wild impulse of incautious speculation, the more thought is disciplined and restrained to act in bounds of reverence and of reason, the more behind all the assemblage of *phænomena* which make the world—does the mind find Him who made them all, find and embrace, embrace and know, till Nature herself is ever saying, "God, the loving, the living God." Think religiously. Discipline thought. "Bring every thought into the obedience of Christ."

After all, however, dear friends, if we are loyal to the exercise of thought, the great world around us and beyond us has not such lessons to teach as the great world within. The great world without witnesses to us of God. Think of it, allow it to act upon you, and you are sure that thought is answering thought; you are sure that a living mind, to which you can speak, is behind these well-ordered carefully-balanced phænomena; you are sure of God.

You are sure of Him in the animal creation. Here you have instinct powerfully at work, and now not by mere dead regulation, but by a living acquiescence things keep tending to an end, working out the meaning of a higher will.

We, too, are the creatures of instinct. The instinctive impulses in us are not less, but greater, than in the lower creatures with whom we share animal

nature. But *they* go blindly on. Swept by the tide of instinct, they are borne towards their end; while *we*—"taken into the secret of things"—can see the meaning of our instinctive life; can understand the value and power of law; can take a conscious share in the activities of our nature. We cannot destroy the value of law; we cannot change its necessary structure; we *can* fall in with it, or violate it and so suffer and sin. We are now no longer compelled by instinct, we are attracted and instructed by duty. And so it is that—fairer, deeper, more mysterious than the starry heavens themselves—we come in view of the moral world.

What does that mean? Brethren, it means *we* are in a world where we can *choose*. We are invited to accept the right; we are warned against, but permitted to accept, the wrong. Men have formed theories of all kinds to account for this fact of our consciousness. But facts are stubborn things, and, after all, a fact of consciousness—an interior fact, a fact of our very being—is as real a fact as a pyramid or a mountain, or the Atlantic Ocean. There it is, the *fact* that we *have* a sense of right, that we have inclinations towards, and yet warnings against, wrong. There it is, like external Nature, only more vivid and more impressive, because so much nearer; like the animal world, only more startling, because

it introduces a closer sense of personal power. There it is, this *sense*—not merely that we can be *causes* of things suggesting to us a way to read the riddle of Nature by reference to a corresponding cause ; not merely that we belong to a vast sentient animal creation moved by impulse and instinct noble or base ; but that we are such that we can talk of our impulses and instincts as "noble or base" ; that we possess a *power* to judge of our own acts in following this or following that ; that we are not blind agents—although surrounded with worlds of mystery—but are allowed to "share the secret" of things, to have our part in guiding and governing the motive principles of our lives. There it is—this *sense* of judging, and approving, and choosing, and determining, and saying whether or not our judgment is right or wrong ; there it is, with all its awful witness—this moral sense! Shall we neglect it, or shall we patiently and earnestly think out its meaning and testimony? There can be but one answer to a serious soul : "Bring every thought into the obedience of Christ."

VI.

Turning, then, into the wide world, and *thinking* on the lines of right and wrong, what do we find?

In so far as we judge others—in so far as we can rightly judge them at all—we do so as living beings. Praise and dispraise in any moral sense, it is truly said, we do not expend on inanimate things. They are beyond the range of moral decisions; these we expend on life and character. We are indifferent to consequences, we are stern on motives. The springs of action are *the* things in the moral judgment. The criminal law must take account of *actions* which hinder the wellbeing of society. That is its function. The moral judgment deals with springs of action—that is character: "Committed it already in thine heart," says the moral judgment. The criminal law has nothing to do with the heart, "Committed it evidently by thine act" is what it declares. And this sense of right and wrong is strong and solemn because it *always* recognises the possibility of an alternative choice None of the approbation, none of the condemnation of which we are so vividly conscious, could be but for the recognition of the fact that things *might* have been otherwise. Men try to account for this sense on utilitarian principles, from hedonistic motives. They scarcely, surely, succeed in deceiving themselves—these most unpractical of philosophers—certainly, they can never *really* deceive mankind. The calculation of loss or gain, of failure or success, of pleasure

or pain, is too long an arithmetical process to work out in the crisis of decision. Does the man who turns firmly and manfully aside from a cowardice-creating passion; does the young girl who abandons some selfish (although not unworthy) pleasure on a sunny afternoon, to read to some blind and aged and forlorn; does the little lad who faces punishment, though trembling in every nerve, sooner than lie—do these calculate the utility of their acts and the "reflex pleasure" of the better choice? Shame upon the low-hearted traitors to their kind who can give themselves up as apostles—say rather as victims—to the hedonistic philosophy! With one spring the interior sense of man leaps to the point of vantage, and sees, for better for worse, what is *right* and what is *wrong*. Is it not evident? Can you—with any serious effort to guide thought aright—can you doubt that when you demand justice, and love, and generosity from others, it is *not* because you have worked out a calculation of their contingent advantages, but because—*do what you will*—you can't help demanding them from yourself? You have a moral sense; in fact, you have a sense of right and wrong. We know that our will is the sovereign faculty. We know that impulses and instincts, passions and desires, fight with one another for sovereignty of influence over that sovereign power. We know

that a voice within says which is right and which is wrong—that a *consciousness* of what *should* sway or inspire the will is a possession of every one of us. We know there is within us all a sovereign judge of choices—we know we have *a conscience*.

VII.

Brethren, it is a serious sense of this which introduces us into the innermost sanctuary of life. Nature with all her splendour—Nature in her many and changeful moods, is a marvellous spectacle. What have we then? We have the reign of law; we have well-ordered sequence. We have more than that; we have beauty, beauty sometimes unspeakable, overwhelming, and all displayed with a quiet restful dignity, if so one may say; seeking no approbation, asking for no admiring or flattering word; sometimes unseen by any mortal eye, and yet going on in stately march and regulated harmony; never declaring its own glory, never acting for its own praise. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork."

Turn to the moral law. *There* there is a spectacle even more splendid: will, and affection, and instinct, and passion balanced by law! There we have the awful fact of a power of choice, with the

attractive vision of goodness on the side of choosing aright. Here is a real *authority*. Allow your thought to be clear, disciplined, fair, and *that* you cannot deny. Here is a judge speaking beyond yourself, outside yourself, upon your actions. Here is *a necessary thought*. Thoughts which come and go, and fade and die, and belong now to this man, now to that, may deceive; but *necessary ideas* cannot deceive. Here is a necessary world of ideas, the sense of cause in us, when we have to explain Nature says at once, "a First Cause." The necessary idea of moral judgment and moral determination, being a necessary idea, must represent a reality; else life and being, and mind and reason, make up an unmanageable chaos; these say "a righteous God."

VIII.

"Bring every thought into the obedience of Christ." Look at the outer world by all means. Look at the stately panorama of Nature spread before your eyes; but look with thought, disciplined and restrained, so as to see reality, and not to go wild in dreams. But also remember "into the obedience of Christ"! Surely here we are called to be loyal to the primal reason. Here we are invited to plunge into the truth of things. Not only on the wide

expanse of material Nature must we stand, saying, No! Brethren, we must *look within.*

This is a lesson we learn, not solely or directly from religion. What was the glory of the philosophic schools of Athens? Why, amidst the corruptions and horrors of the later Roman Empire, did one man here, one there, separated by stretches of intervening years, stand out as landmarks for ever to travellers in the spiritual world—a Boethius, a Seneca, a Marcus Aurelius? Why? Why, as modern life has developed, has literature taken a deeper, a more personal cast? What is the secret of your Dante, your Shakespeare, your Pascal? What is the attraction of the new world of Romance which belongs almost exclusively to later ages—the world of love and suffering, and striking incident, and horrifying tragedy, and pathetic sorrow? What is the secret? Man is *looking within.* "The splendour in the grass, the glory in the flowers," the sunset radiance, and the majesty of the break of day; the awe and stern severity of mountains, the strange weird sentiment of extending plains, the hoarse and terrifying music of the tempest and the roll and roar of angry billows, or the sadness of the sobbing sea: what are these, what are these, compared to the vast, strange, pale, or brilliant landscape of interior character? What are these side by side with

the pathetic sorrows, or the awful tragedies, or the glorious triumphs, or the sad catastrophes, or the complicated troubles, or the tender touches, or the loyal affections, or the changing gleams of light and shadow in the deep realms of a soul's history, in the mystic vicissitudes of an inner life? Yes, man, conscious of his moral nature, man feeling the *sense* of the reality of right and wrong; man awaking to an imperial power, deciding with calm unswerving judgment what is and what is not according to the law of his nature, enters a world of interior experience, and examining it with patient, disciplined thought, says, *Here* is a temple, *here* is a presence, *here* is an awful and a sweet companionship, *here* is a righteous God!

Take *that* explanation away, then, dear friends, the moral world is a perplexing, surprising, unintelligible enigma; it has nothing to do with a realm of reason, it is only the wild phantasmagoria of a distraught brain. Learn that solution, gaze at that presence, *feel* that near and close and tender and awful truth—*then* moral perception is more glorious even than the perception of Nature; *then* you make sense of the facts of experience; *then* the inner life is not an insoluble riddle; *then* you are face to face with a righteous God. Beautiful yet awful, splendid yet solemn, is that vast vista of deep and

unchanging realities which lie stretched before the spiritual eye, the moment it turns round, the moment it tries to take the measure and the meaning of the moral world !

Can we expand it more ? Can we see more clearly what is *involved* in this disciplined habit of thought, brought to bear on the moral world ? My friends, so far as this, we can. The moral sense, which throws so much light upon the character of Him from whom we come, to whom we go, has been, like other endowments of man, capable of education and development. Still, it was always there. Often distorted, often half-developed, it could not speak the *whole* truth, either in savage nations or among cultivated nations of the ancient world. Still, it spoke. What was the great change of thought brought under "the obedience of Christ" in this regard ? Why, this : the value of *personal life*. That was a lesson purely Christian. It is true, indeed, that *social duty* formed much of the teaching of Christ. It was part of our great Master's work to throw new light *on*, new force *into*, old truth. The ancient world believed in *the State ;* individuals were of small account, like Nature,

> So careful of the type . . . .
> So careless of the single life.

Christ taught social responsibility. Yes, *because* He

taught the value of *personal life*. Now, indeed, we reach—so it seems—a period almost reactionary. Under the cover of the name of Christ morality is to be—so it appears—purely social. Never can it be social, in a Christian sense, unless first and chiefly it is individualistic. The value of the *personal* life, the battle in the *personal* soul, the final decision of the *personal* being—these are the points insisted upon in the education of conscience by the "obedience of Christ." Closer, deeper, more searching, more emphatic to *each* soul, as it obeyed the teaching of the great Master, has been the witness of conscience to the righteous God.

Of course, it is therefore in social life that conscience grows or declines. Life strikes on life. We act and react on one another. We are illuminated by nobler lives and rise accordingly; or, preferring the standpoint of meaner natures, our moral sense is cramped or dies. Some spark of the sense of right and wrong lives on and glows at times with a lurid glare, a "certain fearful looking for of judgment"; but all unfaithfulness to known truth brings partial blindness. In other words, all deliberate deafness to the voice of God makes that voice less distinctly heard.

Brethren, the fact is this: it is folly to say that we are to learn by the experience of life, and so be

trained by a calculation of possible results as to what is best and what is worst. The consciousness of the difference between right and wrong is implanted in us. You do not, it has been truly argued, train the sailor by putting him helpless and without teaching to sea, to learn his craft by terrible mistakes and inevitable shipwreck. The soul has *one* life of probation, one and no more. It is endowed with a deep *sense* of the better and the worse. By faithfulness to this the sense grows keener; by faithlessness it grows more blunt. But always there is within us a sense of the supreme authority of the demand for right. There is a witness to the voice of the righteous God.

Conscience makes claims which, the more we *think* of them, the less we can deny their power. It *claims* a recognition in us of the glory of goodness, of the supremacy of right. It claims for the full play of utter righteousness, the truth of immortality. It claims the recognition of the fact of justice and the reality of retribution. It claims the supreme authority of God. So far it makes life a *labour*, a labour for right. It needs illumination and development, and supplements of truth, which come to us from higher revelations. Of these we may speak again. But if we are to be faithful to see in Nature the Mind beyond, behind it all; if we are to be true

to our moral nature, to see within it the righteous will which guides and governs ; then we must, so far as we may—this at least is true—bring thought into subservience to righteous law ; bring, to use Christian language, "every thought into the obedience of Christ."

THE USES OF LIFE

FOR OTHERS

"While we have time, let us do good unto all men, and specially unto them that are of the household of the faith."—GAL. vi. 10.

THE USES OF LIFE

FOR OTHERS

THIS saying is quite according to St. Paul's manner. Here we have him fiery, indignant, argumentative. Here we have him plunging into arguments as to the meaning of patriarchal times, and the office of the true Israel and of the Law. Here we have him soaring up to lofty and mysterious truth, and then, as usual, bringing all his argument to bear on the practical lines and common duties of those to whom he wrote. The true consequence, according to the great Apostle, of all grasp of truth, and all deep sense of the inner meaning of things, is *practice*—a life which expresses what the soul has seen.

St. Paul so far falls in, up to a certain point, with our modern tendency of mind. We pride ourselves on the practical character of our minds and of our religion, and St. Paul is practical. There is, however, it is well to remember, a not inconsiderable difference. With us moderns it seems widely to be be-

lieved that what we believe hardly matters ; one form of religion, it is held, will do quite as well as another. What *does* matter is practical goodness, and that being achieved, the accuracy or inaccuracy, the carelessness or exactness, of our faith scarcely matters. St. Paul, on the other hand, while urging to practical efforts, and laying stress on goodness as the object and result of religion, somehow parts company in other things with the modern mind. To him an *exact* faith is of the gravest importance, and if anyone preaches *any other* faith than *the* faith he is to be held as anathema. Here is a strange contrast! To those who hold the truth of apostolic inspiration it suggests searching questions. This at any rate we shall come to, that while it is perfectly true that mere exactness of *statements* of truth without goodness of life would be futile, men too lightly and readily seem to imagine that *they* know what *goodness* is. "They neglect prayer, disobey the Church, scarcely believe in God; but they are *so good!*" This is often the perplexing statement with which we are met in these days of failing faith. What have we to say?

The trenchant—what would now be called the *intolerant*—answer of the great Apostle we can well imagine; but we are not Apostles, and dare not assume the airs of apostolic authority; and

yet, as Christians, we have an answer of our own. (1) We may well imagine that there *are* good people who are not religious, and religious people who are not good. But having said so, we must explain: *such* religious people are not in the fullest sense religious; *such* good people are only imperfectly good. (2) Wherever *real* goodness is, that is from God. The spirit of the Lord is in the whole world. There may be those who, through imperfect teaching, and not through any malice of the will, are neglectful of God's teaching to His Church. They are, we may well believe, under loss, but when they are not sinning wilfully and are faithful to all they know; we may call them crypto-Catholics, believers without knowing it, and be thankful for all in them that is good. But (3) we must with great seriousness remember that we are inclined to talk somewhat thoughtlessly and glibly about "goodness." Are we sure that we know what we are talking about? "Goodness," after all, is something more than easy good nature, or even a general tendency to kindly philanthropy. If we find people in easy circumstances and with cultivated tastes, and with light and pleasant ways, who are attractive companions or genial and pleasing acquaintances — if we find them neglecting prayer and sacraments and the commandments of God to His Church, we may well be thankful for what *is* good in them; we

may well decline to constitute ourselves their judges ; we may well allow for imperfect teaching—and so on ; but also we must not assume that we know what "goodness" is so perfectly that we can imagine it really to *be*, with any amount of duty to our neighbours, side by side with entire neglect of duty to God.

"To do good," as alone a Christian can translate the phrase, must include a constant recognition not only of kindly human impulses, but first and chiefly of the relation of our own soul and those of others to God, and the duties consequent on that relation. Banishing, then, the surely somewhat sickly and maudlin notion that that magnificent thing "goodness" is fully expressed in harmless respectability and easy good nature, we may follow the great Apostle —so exacting in his demand for exact faith, as well as so earnest in his efforts towards practical application—in examining *one* side of the uses of this life of ours, this life of labour and sorrow—namely, its use for benefiting others as taught by the Gospel of Christ.

"Let us do good unto all men, and especially unto them that are of the household of the faith."

I.

Well, then, brethren, however solemn, or sorrowful, or laborious—life is a gift of incalculable value—a gift to be used—used for the highest purposes, used here and now, or never used at all, and with the opportunity for using it given to us once and no more. To know *how* to use such a gift is all-important; this cannot be denied. Here, then, is *one* use, whatever it may mean; one real reason why life is given to any one of us is "to do good unto all men, and specially to the members of the Christian Church." "What is life?" you ask. One answer is "Labour and sorrow." That is a chilling, a numbing, a distressing answer. "What is life?" again you ask; another answer comes—it may not be exhaustive, but anyhow carrying us a step further: "Life is a rich, a short, a single opportunity for *doing good* to others, which we must use as best we may."

The Apostle here seems to take that view of mankind as a corporate body which is sanctioned by religion, and to lay stress on that view as it takes shape in the constitution of the Christian Church. May we not ask ourselves what are some of the principles which must guide us in this use of life by *doing good* in so far as it relates to others?

The social aspect of such a question is even more clearly brought out to us than it was in the Apostle's days. Civilisation has, in many respects, steadily advanced. The term civilisation is, of course, a fairly elastic one, and yet we *do* attach to it a meaning of tolerable precision, and we *do* connect with the advance of the thing a deeper sense of the social intercommunion of mankind. Whatever else we mean by it, we imply in it some measure of human improvement—at any rate, in the conduct of things relating to this life. It seems to imply something of possession of wealth and power and well-ordered ways, as distinguished from mere savage life. We should be faithless, as Christians, if we did not feel that civilisation, as we understand it, is a blessing. It is not, however, the highest blessing, and it has even a tendency to *impede* much that is good. It encourages certain virtues, but its vices are patent and serious. Whatever may be its faults, it certainly means a habit of acting together. The savage peoples are such that individuals depend upon their own individual strength. In civilised nations they come together for common purposes. Encouragement is given to law and order, to justice and a wise and systematised employment of common strength, so as to check the injury that otherwise might be done by one to the other. In it, liberty—as we

understand it—is protected, and rights as to life and property are protected, so as to preserve a peaceful order of things in which men can develop their resources and character. In it, on the whole, those forms of virtue which tend to uphold or defend society receive encouragement. The natural virtues, speaking broadly, are recognised and stimulated, and honesty, honour, sincerity, manliness, hard work, and a fair estimate of the claims of others as well as our own, are kept in view.

Civilised man has to subject himself and his efforts to public scrutiny, and to endure criticism in a fair and reasonable spirit, and to make efforts to help on the improvement in the condition of others around him. More: there is implied in this an increasing interest in the study of the arts of life, and in efforts to give complete security to property and person.

From this philosophers have remarked certain consequences. Power comes from the possession of property, or the possession of intelligence. As civilisation advances this naturally spreads from individuals to groups, and from groups to masses. To use it well is a duty. Politicians may not be always over-scrupulous, it may be feared, perhaps, in their way of teaching its use. Here, at any rate, is a call for those who are Christians. "To do good unto all

men" under the conditions of modern civilisation is to help them to understand the responsibility of power.

And then civilisation implies the power to combine. Where men combine there must be some co-operation in the midst of the ordinary rivalries of life. Such co-operation necessitates compromise. The individual will—*must* in many cases, if we are to do right—be sacrificed for the good of the whole. In all this there may be vast moral benefit. In all this we can see the leading guidance of God. In great undertakings men must work together. Where would the ship be, think you, if the sailors each worked simply for himself and alone? Where would be the chance of success in war but for the disciplined co-operation of the army corps? Where would commerce and manufactures be in any vigorous and prosperous country if many "hands" were not co-operating for mutual help? Civilisation, then, without even naming the name of religion, is in great measure aiding in doing its work. Under its influence, men submit themselves to guidance, they learn to subdue themselves. They learn habits of discipline, and instead of being restive under restraint, they value control. With an advancing civilisation, knowledge grows, co-operation advances, and multitudes are employed by the increasing sense of the value of a division of labour.

It is interesting to remember (as we note this apostolic principle of acting on the *brotherhood* of man) that with our advancing civilisation has come the enormous advance of the newspaper press. Allowing for all the vast mass of charlatanry and pretence, of self-seeking and carelessness as to principle which may be involved in this, it *is* a power with real benefit, which enables the individual to learn that others and many others are thinking as he thinks and feeling as he feels. Of course there is a temptation (sometimes yielded to, especially among the self-interested) to influence the masses in any way good or bad. Of course, also, there is an exaggerated value placed on what is called public opinion. *It* has its value, but that value may be exaggerated. It is the registered result of all the conclusions of civilised men as to the virtues and duties which are found to be necessary for the preservation and prosperity of society. A common stock of thought and sympathy is sure to be accumulated in an organised body. This stock, this force—for it is nothing less—is a product of civilisation. It is created in all sorts of circles, of societies, and coteries of men. It belongs to professions, and classes, and workers of various kinds; and in our ever-advancing days it becomes more and more cosmopolitan; it becomes, or tends to become, more

and more a world-wide force. It generally deals with what touches the self-preservation of the society or the class. It is just short of being really religious. It is often good as far as it goes. It is capable of being deeply corrupted. "To do good to all men," in a Christian sense, must mean at least, in our advanced civilisation, an effort to *influence* public opinion, and sometimes to do so by boldly withstanding it—strong though it is. Nothing can be more certain than that any one who sincerely determines to serve God must be prepared sooner or later to find himself in the minority, and to find public opinion strongly against him. This is a necessity of a Christian's position as a follower of the Crucified, and of the character, the unchanged character of "the world," which "crucified the Lord of glory." "Do good to all men," then, means nothing short of fearlessly, though temperately, withstanding public opinion to its face, when it is to be blamed.

II.

We may then follow the apostolic teaching, dear friends, by cultivating our sense of corporate responsibility, by encouraging and strengthening, so far as we can, the better tendencies of civilisation, by watching, supporting, or withstanding public opinion,

as the case may be, with temperate thoughtfulness and an independent and fearless resolution.

There are further opportunities given to the Christian from the characteristic effects of civilisation. For instance, it has been asserted, and not without some reason, that an advancing and complicated civilisation leads to a relaxation of individual energy, or a use of it merely to *get oneself on*. Christianity, whenever it is real, is looking beyond. It raises the eyes from earth to heaven. It cannot allow a soul to be contentedly engrossed with present things. It will insist on the duty of effort, and effort with high objects before one, and *not* merely to advance self in a worldly sense. Again, the tendency of civilisation is to teach men to look upon poverty as the worst evil. The worst evil it is *not*. It is a severe trial ; it may be a blessed discipline. There are, however, worse things than poverty. It is at least possible for a Christian to "do good" by leading others to feel *that* which consoles and supports so often, that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth."

On the whole, again, there is an effort to banish the spectacle and even the idea of pain. To this there is a good side, doubtless, but there is also a weak side. In some respects we may become more amiable, but

we are going farther and farther from the heroic. Civilisation alone increases the tendency to an easy-going selfishness. It inclines men to shrink from effort. It gives more and more a distaste to all that is disagreeable and troublesome. It inclines to moral effeminacy, and a general inclination to say: "What does it matter?" It has been truly enough said that if great vices are placed under considerable restraint, the sources of great virtue are, in an increasing degree, dried up. More still; it has been said that unless voices are loud now, they are lost in the general din, and immediate "success" must depend, not upon what one *is*, so much as upon what one *seems*. Literature itself tends, so it has been thought, in many respects, to degeneracy. Little chance is there of great successes, for books really *thought out* have little chance. Great "successes" seem to await books in romance literature which are either immoral or spiced with unbelief, and which have "friends at court," in the shape of "critics" on newspaper staffs whose business is to proclaim their merits. "Society" then adopts them, and it becomes a civilised necessity that they should be in every library and in every club. Intellectual food has to be *bolted;* and the ephemeral publications, the newspapers and magazines carry all before them. Little is read slowly, or carefully thought over.

Impressions of any serious and improving character are not left on the mind.

These are faults, and almost inevitable faults, of an advancing civilisation; but, after all, dear friends, they only give larger scope to the Christian for fulfilling the duty of which St. Paul speaks. We make a grave mistake if we undervalue the blessings of civilisation, for *all* good gifts come from God; but we make a graver mistake, and a much more common one, if we imagine that civilisation, however advanced, can do everything for fallen man. It may, indeed—as it has been said—train and furnish man for that civil state which is his proper condition here. It may incite him to all sorts of skill and achievement and endeavour, and even to the exercise and development of thought. It may help in a thousand ways to lead him to the highest possible uses of present things; but the future, the great future, it cannot touch. It may supply material on which character can be exercised, but it cannot give either the impetus or the sustaining strength by which high character is formed. Men are not made good by Act of Parliament; sin is not corrected, or sorrow soothed, or the deeper springs of life reached, by discoveries and inventions and readjustments in matters which relate to this life alone. Civilisation can never create goodness, and that high and mys-

terious thing is precisely what humanity has to be aiming at, and to which, if it is to attain, it must attain by forces of a very different character from those supplied by a civilised life.

Who can doubt, for instance, the high state of civilisation of ancient Greece? It is true, indeed, that many discoveries, which have proved important for the easy working of material life, had not then been made; but in art—especially the art of sculpture—in the sense of beauty and in the delicacy of exact philosophic thought, they were beyond ourselves. Who, again, can doubt the high attainments of the civilisation of Rome? In the sense of the dignity of citizenship, in the sense of the sanctity of law, in the power of organisation, they were beyond us moderns; and as far as poetry and literature go, both these great peoples were no whit behind. And what was the consequence? The consequence was, amidst many undoubted blessings, undoubtedly corruption and despair. To correct the evident faults and dangers of civilisation, you need everything that will strengthen and enlarge individual character; everything that will enable the individual to aim at what is noble and thorough. That is precisely what civilisation alone will not teach. Like the old theories of Greece and Rome, it is always dealing with multitudes of men, and not with *souls*. Like modern

Socialism, with its unquestionably amiable intentions and its sometimes unpractical follies, it is doing the same thing. The individual soul is nothing, masses of men are everything. Another power is needed to correct this grave mistake. Masses cannot be dealt with to any purpose as regards their real and lasting benefit, except soul by soul. In civilisation there is not only room for, there is the highest possible need for, the Christian, imbued with the apostolic enthusiasm, to "do good unto all men, especially to them that are of the household of the Faith"; there is, in fact, the highest need for "religion."

III.

And if, indeed, an advanced civilisation, far from diminishing, in fact increases our opportunities of spiritual usefulness, what—at any rate speaking broadly — is implied in the apostolic precept? What must we all endeavour to keep before our eyes?

Well, here is implied a very large measure of self-denial and of pure and unworldly motive. The noblest things are often unseen, or very dimly seen indeed. The lofty peaks of giant mountains are robed in the glory of spotless snow, and glitter in the splendour of the sun; but often they are wrapped

about with shrouds of fog which rise from below them, and hidden from human eyes. A noble character and a self-denying life is often sufficiently secret. Be not afraid of a hidden life. Characters which exercise the most real influence for eternity upon others are often in the shade. There is coming a day when there will be many reversals of human judgment, and some who have lived in the smiles of public notoriety and enjoyed the incense of the flattering of the crowd, will be found of small account compared to the hidden but faithful servants of God. "There are last that shall be first, and there are first that shall be last."

"To do good to all men" in a really religious sense implies self-denial, determination, and that rare and beautiful thing, truth of character. We feel this the more we remember that all really Christian action must mean a following of Christ. Men of action who play a public part, it has been justly enough said, seek for power by the use of force, by able persuasion, or by dexterous action. The latter method we can well understand, as it is almost necessarily, it would seem, common in democratic communities, and we have become so accustomed to it from the study of political history that in *that* field of effort we are sometimes tempted almost to cease to look for morality or truth. To

none of these methods did Christ resort. If we want to realise His methods we have only to contemplate those of many great historic figures, and then we shall see the completeness of contrast. Christ would not argue deftly, or adroitly conceal His meaning, or have recourse to subterfuge or flattery, or appeal to the lower human passions. If He were to reign at all, He would only reign by faith. What *He* did was to be careful never to impose upon any one, but to show Himself precisely as He was. What *He* did was not to practise or praise adroit deception, or, so to speak, argumentative sleight-of-hand, but, at all costs, to insist upon the majesty and beauty of truth. That, as a matter of fact, it cost Him His life proves nothing against His method. It only illustrates the fact of the fallen condition of human nature, and reminds us that His aims were far-reaching, and His character of the highest moral elevation, and entirely free from all seeking of self. The consequence has been, as we very well know, that under very different social conditions, and on levels of civilisation very divergent from one another, He has, by the confession of His enemies, and to a degree quite unrivalled in human history, "done good unto all men, and specially to the members of His own holy Church."

If our lives are to be finally fruitful, it cannot be

doubted that they must follow the same plan. Nor is it less doubtful that in so doing they part company with many of those principles which have been often practically accepted by mankind ; for whilst we cannot doubt the benefits of civilisation on which we have glanced ; whilst we cannot doubt certain blessings which have come to us from the advance of free institutions, from the age of railways and the age of newspapers ; whilst we cannot but be thankful for a great deal of goodness, we also cannot fail to be alive to the fact that there is often much more interest in religious things than actual religious principle to be found in our time, and that the saying of a great historian is really and painfully true, that, as contrasted with this age, there was in the Middle Ages—of which we are often apt to speak so slightingly—"a good deal of living religion which exercised over the daily lives and political views of men an influence that is scarcely comprehensible at the present day." The fact is, more rather than less in a state of advancing civilisation have Christians to *exert* themselves "to do good unto all men" in the highest and real sense, trying in the sense of Christ, not to seek to please, not to seek to be popular, much less to seek to cajole or trick or deceive, but to seek, by the energetic and self-denying employment of virtues which civilisation scarcely

cares to imitate (although it may pay to them the tribute of a passing admiration) to advance the kingdom of God.

This is of the last importance, for there seems to be a tendency at present to decide questions as to truth and goodness, not by revelation or the teaching of the Church, but by the voice of majorities. The Catechism is out of fashion, and, according to the teaching of many who speak in loud and quasi-authoritative tones, the gravest of faults is to be content with the place in life to which God may have called you. In the new Christianity, which asserts itself boldly, sympathy no longer goes with hidden virtues and quiet work, or with suffering and patience, but rather with those who abound in denunciation of everything and everybody opposed to party courses, or with those who seem to consider that the whole duty of man is to "scream" after some "fad" or stir some one set of men against some other. Hence there are plenty who are never content unless they are abusing the Church, denying her doctrines, reviling her ministry, denying her sacraments, and generally in the name of some sort of religion "playing to the gallery." There never was an age in which high principle and disinterestedness and unselfish efforts were more entirely needed, if, in any truly religious sense, we

are "to do good unto all men, and especially unto them that are of the household of the Faith."

IV.

Hence it is, dear friends, that in paying practical attention to such an exhortation there is implied a very deep and real sense of the greatness of the true battle of life—the battle between good and evil. In our natural state—that is, in our fallen nature—it is difficult for us to realise the seriousness of evil at all. "The world," as St. John conceives it, takes no note of it whatever in the sense of a Christian. It is impossible, indeed, for any one to deny the vast mass of sorrow which is around us, or to close his eyes to the tragedies of life. But these are somehow or other explained away. Sometimes this evil is represented as imperfect goodness—evident misrepresentation to any one who thinks of the subject as it clearly develops from bad to worse. Sometimes it is represented as a necessary step in the progress of the world—an equally fallacious notion, as it can be clearly enough shown that it is just in proportion as it has been mitigated or diminished that life in any true sense has progressed at all. "The world" certainly makes light of sin; sometimes it even tries to deck it out in factitious

ornaments, and to conceal its ruinous tendency by calling it by attractive names. Evil, however, in the view of Christianity, is *the master* misfortune. It arises from the position of a created will placed in opposition to the necessary law of the universe; that is, to the all-holy will of God. And its volume and power have, to a great extent, accumulated as ages have gone on. Sin has often changed its appearance or masqueraded in different masks and dresses, but as the essential conditions of life do not change with advancing civilisation, so no more is there any essential change in the intrinsic awfulness of evil. It is, as it always has been, a horrible reality.

And as real, and as far removed from any dependence on the mere discoveries or advances of civilisation, is that wonderful and substantial thing, true goodness. It has been called a "discrowned greatness," but the greatest of all greatnesses it is notwithstanding; for it is not, as it has been truly said, like inventiveness or wisdom or intellectual swiftness, the mere greatness of human endowment; but it is the greatness of the soul itself. A purified and regenerate will, enlarged and quickened affections, steady and secure loyalty to what *ought* to be done—these constitute the greatness of a being in his own very essence. External circumstances are

of small consequence in a matter of this kind. Just as it makes no real difference when you are face to face with a man of genius—a Dante, a Newton, a Beethoven—whether or not the surroundings of his earthly life were of the humblest ; *so*, and much more even, in a matter of this sort the hiddenness and humility, or the loftiness and high appearance of external circumstance, make no sort of difference at all. It is, wherever it is, real greatness—the highest and noblest of all things known to man ; and it, too, as soul after soul becomes subject to it, knows the meaning of increase, and leaves behind it accumulated forces.

These two vast powers are face to face in human life in internecine struggle. The struggle has been deadly since the fall of man, and deadly it will be to the end, and in our short years of probation here the greatest of all responsibilities which lies upon us is to see to it that we take the right side. Evil dogs our steps and shadows our lives. Unseen powers push on its advance over the mass of mankind. Goodness is within the reach of every human soul, even the very humblest, and it is the very highest thing that man has known or can know. Forces unseen and splendid are placed at men's disposal to assist them to its attainment, although the warp in their wills, their mysterious downward tendency

since the Fall, makes it more difficult than the pursuit of evil. Therefore it is that exertion and vigilance and loyalty are needed in the Christian just as much in this age as in any age, for though the form of the battle may change, the battle itself must go on. Therefore it is that, if, being Christians, we have any sense of the use of life and of its gravity and seriousness, we must "do *good* unto all men, and specially to them that are of the household of the Faith."

V.

We cannot but feel convinced that in the moral world much more is done by the contagion of example than by any mere teaching, however careful and accurate. More than that: there is an electric force, if so I may call it, which goes forth from the soul, and affects other souls for which nothing, no accuracy of knowledge, no power of statement, no merely natural fire, will form a substitute.

The important thing in influencing others is not so much what we *say* or what we *do*, as what we *are*. If "to do good to all men" be the great use of life, if not masses but individuals are those who are subject to the powers of the world to come, then our first duty must be to acquire some measure of goodness ourselves. To say this is to launch

forth upon a wide sea, but we may content ourselves, brethren, here and now in remembering within the limits of our actual subject just what is *implied* for our own souls and for our general moral conduct in so serious a thought.

Well, this at any rate is true: it is implied that we have at least wakened up to the necessity of making a real and sustained effort to get things into proportion, to see things in right perspective, to put them in their proper place. Ascend through the forests on the Catskill Mountains when the autumn days are falling; sometimes you have close around you a soft mist or tender haze obscuring the distant landscape and allowing the nearer objects to assume a disproportionate size. You reach the summit, and in the brightness of the sunset or the clearness of the morning dawn, the blue hills in the distance, the wide stretches of the plain, the broad flow of the stately Hudson, and immediately at your feet the varying tints of the forest in the wealth of changeful colour of "the Fall"—all assume their proper relative proportions and stretch out a great panorama before the eyes. Climb the heights of the Anti-Lebanon in the hot hours of the Syrian afternoon: the haze of heat from the burning rocks, the dazzling brilliance of the burning sky, combine to prevent the possibility of taking an accurate measure of

the stretch of the great plain, of the "entering in of Hamath," or the wooded slopes of the opposing range. Turn the corner as the evening is advancing and the fierce heat of the day has given place to the purer brightness of sunset and the clear brilliance of the Syrian night, and you have before you the deep valley, the intertwinings of the Barada and Pharpar, the interlacings in the gardens of the roses and oleander, then the domes and minarets of the world-old city, and the vast ring of the Hauran encircling all, every object falling into its place, and altogether creating for the eye a spectacle of unexampled beauty.

So it is in life. In youth we are tempted to think too much of pleasure: I do not mean pleasure evil and base and bad, but pleasure legitimate so far as it goes: we are apt, I say, to make too much of it, but if we do so without restraint and proportion there comes a sense of degeneracy and failure.

It may have a shadow of God's beauty about it, but it is not an adequate object for life. It passes away and man does not. The time must come when the night will be dark and strength will be failing, and the storms will be out. To meet such time, the soul will need to have had its eye as a main object upon something higher than this.

Sometimes, again, we have a delirium for know-

ledge and feel the attraction of intellectual power. We are conscious how great a thing it is to see and know with the inward light of the mind. It enlarges, it elevates, it has a preciousness and a nobility about it, all its own. And yet it, as the main object for the eye to rest upon, is clearly inadequate. Great intellectual achievement and considerable intellectual success—these, alas! may be possessed together with perverted wills and corrupted hearts. Meanness and pettiness and even wickedness are not always alien, as we know too well, from striking intellectual power.

The *one* thing which supremely and above everything else we must aim at is sincerity, reality, duty, and truth. Thoroughness, not show, we must make for. More and more as life goes on we must fear and shrink from all that is merely showy, and flashy, and insincere. We Christians profess to be the followers of One who in pain and strain withstood the violence of temptation, and refused to win anything that could be given Him by the world or the flesh, or the powers of evil in their most attractive aspect, if the price to be paid by Him was the slightest act of disobedience to God.

Brethren, this is surely what the Apostle means; *at least* this—for he means, of course, much more in detail—that if the great *use* of life is "to do good

unto all men," the first great *duty* of life is to learn the meaning of *goodness* ourselves.

The needs of men are indeed extreme and constant in spite of all the gifts of an advancing civilisation. Religion, religious men, religious principles—these are needed now not less than they were; rather more. The vagaries and follies and positive injustices and immoralities which are still in the world masquerade as religion, whilst in reality they deny its first principles. Religious men must be up and doing. There is need of kindness and gentleness, of tolerance and considerateness, of large-hearted sympathy and self-denying devotion. There is need of earnest, solid, quiet work, instead of "screaming"; of earnest, faithful, unflagging prayer, instead of talk; of high principle instead of colourless platitude; of faithfulness instead of indifferentism; there is need of backbone; there is need of truth. Christ in His sternness, Christ in His gentleness, Christ in His quiet but firm resistance to temptation—He is our ideal. We must let all things go sooner than fall in with the modern wordly way of paltering with principle and taking liberties with truth.

One of the greatest novels of the century has drawn a startling, a heart-rending picture of a life full of sorrow, full of misfortune, ending in a very sad and touching death. In the course of

the story there is a tremendous crisis—a crisis, be it remembered, which in some form or other and in some degree, be it great or small, sooner or later comes to all of us—when a decision has to be made between truth, duty, and apparent ruin on the one hand, and falseness and treachery and worldly success on the other. The hero of the tale resists the temptation, but with the natural and tremendous struggle that was sure to be, and the results are misfortune and sorrow, but there is left behind on the mind of the reader the vivid picture of that most beautiful of all things, a strong and brave and noble character. Were this world everything, such struggle, crowned by only such victory, although our consciences commend it and endorse it, would seem absurd. But this world is not everything. This life is to be used for a high purpose for others, and therefore we have to take care to be true to ourselves.

"While we have time"! "While we have time"! While we are young and strong, while our enthusiasms are fresh, while our brains are clear, while our hearts are still unsullied through the "corruptions that are in the world through lust," while we are supplied with the vast fund of interests which lie before us in this most interesting life, while our affections are warm, while dear friends are around

us and great opportunities are placed at our disposal, while sorrow has not yet darkened our horizon nor the first clouds of the night come over our sky—of the night which cometh when no man can work; while all this is ours, life in its bloom and its beauty, so that when much of this is gone in after years the greatest things may still remain—let us bend our efforts to truth and duty, let us live with high principle and unselfish aims, let us remember that the use of life is "to do good unto all men," and that if we please, so life may be used by the example and in the power of Christ.

THE END OF SORROW

"And their soul shall be as a watered garden, and they shall not sorrow any more at all."—JER. xxxi. 12.

THE END OF SORROW

JEREMIAH is the prophet of sorrow. In his Lamentations the heart-ache of a patriot and a prophet culminates, and cries over the sins of his people and the sorrows of the Church. But through all the unfolding drama of his marvellous prophecy there is a strain of pathetic, one had almost said despairing, sorrow. His life is one of those mysterious examples of a life removed from the common ways of men; wholly forgetful of self, wholly absorbed in a stern enthusiasm for righteousness and truth, fearlessly plain in denunciations of evil, nobly indifferent to the ordinary rules of prudence or the common current of opinion around him—there he stands, one of the chief figures among the striking group of Hebrew prophets in whom the sense of truth and duty overtopped and shattered all merely earthly motives: there he stands with a life of sadness and a death of degradation, pre-eminently to be described —were it not that one far greater than he had earned and possessed the title as "the man of sorrows."

And yet, amidst all the troubles of his time which weigh him down; amidst the moral disasters of his people, which cut him to the heart; amidst his own overwhelming troubles, like all the great messengers of the Eternal, he is a man of the future, he is looking beyond. How far the prophets *clearly* entered into the meaning of their own prophecies in their fulness, may be a question. We cannot doubt that they *did* enter into them in a very great degree. The prophets were men *before their time*. Like great discoverers or great inventors they saw truths clearly, which at the moment others might jeer at, or doubt, or misunderstand, but which men would one day be driven to acknowledge as plain and palpable facts. The revealing Spirit of God seems to have seized and possessed and illuminated the understanding of his chosen servants, so that the future became present, and the long, slow working-out and course of things were compressed before them into one clear-cut and decisive act. To them for the hour or the moment of their message they seemed, by divine guidance, to be gifted with that superhuman capacity by which time vanishes and eternity is all; by which "one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day"; so that in a single rapid lightning flash, cause and effect, effect again becoming cause, were gathered into one clear vision of a present scene.

Something like this prophetic gift we see—in smaller measure—in *good* men, and men who can clearly see and clearly state truths. Truths come before such in their various bearings, not in the one-sided way in which they present themselves to us pigmies of common mould, so that in these, in the highest degree, *that* is true which, in some measure, is true for all, that a genuine capacity for moral or spiritual greatness is measured by the power of throwing ourselves into the future.

Hence in a very real sense the prophets, hence in a very real sense God's noble servants, with whatever spiritual joy they have been clothed, have been—and necessarily have been—men of sorrow. For if the actual and the ideal are so different; if such a chasm yawns between aspiration and achievement; if a man's reach must exceed his grasp; if beauty of vision is ever in contrast with failure around our feet—there is and must be an element of sadness in holy souls, a chastened but a real sadness, in proportion to their nearness to God.

Sorrow is the heritage of the prophet. To stand in some sense alone, to see visions that others do not share, to value truths which by others are despised, to penetrate beyond the cloud which hems in the world with which others are content—this means some measure of elevation of character and isolation

of spirit; and therefore—being what we are—means sadness or even sorrow.

Jeremiah saw vividly the mistakes and the sins of his people. He had immediate duties to do, and he did them—did them, as the true prophet does, regardless of consequence, and counting and accepting with intrepid fortitude, the cost. But there was something beyond. The prophetic eye *saw* that on which St. Paul dwelt with such reasoned calmness and earnestness, the *real* meaning of the chosen people. "Israel according to the flesh" had passed from its merely ephemeral and symbolic function into the fulness of its meaning, into the Church of God. The great Apostle, we know, saw and taught with his usual force and uncompromising determination the *true* meaning of the *true* Israel, the fact that "in Christ" is found the real family of the patriarch, that they that are in Christ are Abraham's seed, that the real Israel is the Church of the Redeemer. But what St. Paul saw and taught after the full revelation of Christ in him, that Jeremiah saw in mystic vision. There was for him the earthly Israel, with all its sins and frailties, with all its needs of warning and instruction, with its desperate failures and its great deliverances; there was more.

Yes, brethren, there was the vision of the spiritual Israel. Its troubles also were to be terrible, and its

sins and failures full of sorrow; troubles which should arise from sin and disobedience, as naturally and necessarily as the shadow follows the substance —the troubles, the sins, the failures—alas! so many and so dreadful—of the Christian Church. There were also before him, in the marvellous revelation of the future given to his prophetic mind, the mystic forces and consolations with which the Church was to be endowed: "They shall flow together to the goodness of the land for wheat and for wine and for oil." Spiritual blessings, mysterious and soothing, were to be found in the true Israel; the mysterious force and consolation of prayer; the teaching of the sacred Scriptures with the "comfort" which, with "patience," was to bring hope; the solemn and powerful and majestic sacraments; the meeting points between this world and another; the points of contact between man and God. These were to be there. There, too, was to be the comfort of repentance, and the soothing consolations given to "the broken and contrite heart," the cry of entreaty of simple-hearted desire, the spiritual whispers of the unseen and the calming caresses of God; the direct way of an enlightened conscience and of a clear revelation of the faith, showing the path of human duty, showing the way of the soul in its progress heavenward. These minglings of joy and

sadness were to be the possession of the true Israel—of the Church in her struggle. "They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble; for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born." Such comforts, together with such sorrows, were to be in the Church of the future. But more; it was allowed to *this* prophet, this man of tribulation, to see the time when weariness and trial should close, when an end at last should be put to the troubles of the Church and of the Christian soul. Oh! wonderful revelation from the lips of the prophet of trouble: "Then Israel shall be as a watered garden, and they shall not sorrow any more at all."

I.

Life, my friends, in whatever way we look at it is—we cannot deny it - "labour and sorrow." The teaching of the prophet represents that great strand of thought which relieves and explains such a view of life in the belief of a Christian. Such a view of life we all know is no delusion. It may, of course, be put forward in a morbid, or maudlin, or unhealthy, or unpractical way, but it *need not*. It may be before us as it is, *as a fact*, like other facts, to be looked at

earnestly, and to have its measure taken. There is plenty, of course, in life that is attractive and entrancing. There is plenty to be thankful for, and we are wicked and ungrateful if this is forgotten.

Of course there are, for us, in a way in which Jeremiah could never have known them, the ripe fruits of an advancing civilisation. There are glorious rewards to industrious effort, and to genius, which is the art of "taking pains." Art has its triumphs, science its startling discoveries, industry its rewards. It is possible for men to go smoothly on too who have never had a heart-ache, never have had a bad illness, never fallen into a really destructive sin, not yet passed the sunny days of two-and-twenty, had a kindly heart, and easy circumstances, and pleasant friends: it is possible for such to find life scarcely like labour, and certainly free from sorrow; also, probably, quite possible and pleasant in their own estimation without the effort of prayer or the encumbrance of the thought of God.

But does this widely represent real life? Certainly not. Go to geniuses who are scarcely Christian, but who can see and read things beneath the crust. Listen to Heine, listen to Leopardi. Go to geniuses, who are Christian, but scarcely ecclesiastical; listen to Browning, read *In Memoriam*. Go to the neighbouring cemetery on the summer afternoons, and amidst

the leaves, and the soft picture of the opening flowers bending beneath the soothing breeze, watch the heart-broken mourner offering the tribute of tears to silent dust which can no longer be paid to a beating heart! Go to the narrow lives of your great centres of civilisation, go to the stifling garrets where are found the dying beds of the poor. Yes, go, if you like, to the stately drawing-room, where all that wealth can give of luxury and self-pleasing brings nothing but selfishness and uneasiness and discontent. Where are you then? You are in a world, believe me, where the most awful sensible power is pain, and behind it the most awful spiritual power is sin. You are in a world which you have no right to contemplate merely with the eyes of the contented and successful, which you have no right to look at, as a successful politician may, when playing his game in the House of Commons, or keeping himself in power at the expense of principle, or by cajoling the people; or as a successful actor may who enjoys his profession, and draws large houses and gets quick returns; or as a happy pleasure-seeker may, who glides through life as selfish people do, who are furnished with the means of making life comfortable—keeping out of sight all that is disagreeable, and taking all the pleasure for themselves that they can. You have no

right to think *that* is life. It is a world—*the* world—in which men are defeated, in which there is abundance of self-ruin, and plenty of ruin which does not come from self. It is a world in which the majority are the miserable, in which moment by moment there are the dying, in which there are, alas! so many who have found that no goodness and righteousness succeed, but only a plentiful supply of all that can ensnare and delude. That, my friends, is the world we live in. The moment you really *face* your own history, the moment you really take the measure of such a world, the moment you mean *to do your best* in it—both in your own soul and for others—what is it you need, I ask? One thing certainly—you need the power of indomitable hope.

When you name *that*, you are face to face with a virtue that is a form of manly strength, which cannot be dispensed with if we human beings are to face and deal with the facts of life. Hope, the Christian believes, is a power which is given to the soul, through the merits of the Redeemer in the Sacrament of holy Baptism. It is guarded, so the Faith teaches, by the gifts of holy fear and ghostly strength given in their fulness in the Sacrament of Confirmation. It is the very force which gives effect and *spring* to faith. It rises up with pleading eyes and

confident trust, and makes appeal to God and His goodness against all the adverse appearances of an evil and betraying world. It demands an effort of will, and a strong effort too, co-operating with the grace of God to withstand the terrible seductions, or allurements, or underminings of despondency and despair. It *therefore*—because it is a moral effort—educates the soul. It fastens on to the great things of life, when usually we are tempted to dally with its trifles. It faces life as it comes, and brings a sunshine over its cloudiest days. It looks forward to things which are presented to us here and now. In so far as they are good and right it trusts God for them, but—if they are withheld—it is not by that beaten down. It rests upon *promises* which cannot be shaken. It rests on God's *character*, if so we may say with reverence, on that which cannot be lowered. But amidst all these things it does point beyond. "Other-worldliness" is out of fashion now-a-days. Religion is all "altruism" or "socialism," or some other "ism." Hope, however, is not ashamed —a Christian's hope—of being "other-worldly." When all is said and done it is *looking on*.

Brethren, we Christians know that Christ is our hope. He—if we are in Him—has taken with Him into His glory that which is of value to us. There, moth and rust do not corrupt; there our treasure is.

We live by hope because He *now* gives us that knowledge of God which—not *will be*—but *is* eternal life; we live by hope because He has done so much for us, bearing our nature and sharing our suffering, that we can trust in God; we live by hope because in Him we know we have a guarantee for the solving of all problems and the reading of all riddles; because we feel, and cannot fail to feel, that we can look onward. Life, however dark and sad, is not everything! Life, however truly it may be said to be "labour and sorrow," is not all. Life, whatever be its trials, *is* only a trial. We have a great revelation; hope fastens on *that*. That is the value of the prophetic teaching; that is the point on which we fix our eye, to which we labour on. We have a right to hope, if we are Christians, for trouble has an end. "Their soul shall be as a watered garden, and they shall not sorrow any more at all."

II.

"They shall not sorrow any more at all"! Here, then, is a statement which is no stretch of poetic imagination, but represents a clear view of prophetic vision. There is to be an end of sorrow. Tread in the straight path. Cling to the power God places at your disposal; there will be an end of sorrow.

The future, brethren—that is an inspiring thought

of our religion—the future is with the Christian. It is all very well to say that in saying so religion forgets the exigencies of the present. It does nothing of the kind. But the present, after all, must go. Moment by moment is passing on. Nothing is more heart-moving, nothing more soul-subduing than the thought how necessarily we live under the law of change. Modes of thought, ways of speech, tastes and manners, habits, and methods of looking at things are ever changing. The waters of life are flowing by. In one sense *we* do not change. The soul is itself, in the depth, the awful depth, of its personal life, *affected* by changing circumstances, but still the same. What *it* needs is the permanent, the everlasting; what it needs is a refreshment and help which will keep it in eternal vigour and free it from the misery of changing time. The future is with the people of God. "Their souls shall be as a watered garden, and they shall not sorrow any more at all."

If life be, as it is in a noble way as well as in a sad way, "labour and sorrow," one thing the New Testament insists upon, say what we may; and that is that the vision of the prophet be kept before us as a real, a practical, a stimulating truth. It is a simple truth, then, and not the dream of a dreamer, that there lies before each of us, if we will, a life of

unimagined wonder beyond the grave. We who are the mere creatures of sense and time in so large a part of our lives, can paint no approximately adequate pictures of that land very far off. And yet, if the Bible means anything at all, it means that we are to allow our minds to dwell upon the great unknown as a centre of blessedness, for all who "seek for glory and immortality"; as a real motive to stimulate us in the battle of life. We are to allow ourselves to think of that which indeed is mysterious, which is beyond our power to paint even in imagination; to think of the time when the springs of joy shall be living and energetic, when the soul shall be as a watered garden, and we "shall not sorrow any more at all."

Is it nothing to believe in and try to imagine the time when pain shall be no more? Can we look on a world in throes of anguish, can we picture to ourselves the thousands of homes of woe, can we let our minds dwell upon the unutterable mass of human suffering which day by day, even in our improved conditions of civilisation, are shone upon by the sun, which brings no gladness to so many, or watched night by night by the stars, which can whisper no word of joy; can we stand in imagination by innumerable beds of suffering, by the volume of human pain even in hospitals, where science can bring some-

thing of soothing, much more by miserable beds or in dungeons where human pity and human skill cannot penetrate ; can we think of a civilisation that tolerates a Siberia under a Government called Christian, that is powerless even now in stopping the inhumanity of slavery, and which has to allow for masses of unrealised, unrelieved misery under the glitter of modern life, without coming back to the fact, as one of real and practical importance, that the time is coming when "they shall not sorrow any more at all"?

Or turn, as a Christian, to the fact of sin. Here you are face to face with a great mystery, yet a terrible certainty. Heart-breaking, we know its power in our own hearts, in our own lives. Heart-breaking, too, in the widespread sorrow it brings in its train. I do not forget the severe and awful sayings of the New Testament. I do not forget that "the curtain falls" upon a scene of judgment and decision, upon a great separation ; and that awful words—the most awful ever spoken—are uttered by the lips of love as to the consequence of persistent unrepented sin. I do not forget the unfathomable mystery that lies beyond. Still, there are words of immeasurable tenderness, not for the hard, the high-handed, the determined, but for the weak and erring and penitent. Still there are the unfathomed

depths of God's love, ever striving with human sin; still the father, when he sees him "a long way off," runs to meet the penitent; still, anyhow, there is the blood of Christ, the Lamb who "taketh away" the sin of the world. Still there is mercy for the penitent and pardon for the sorrow-laden, and light in darkness, if we will turn to it, and cleansing from all iniquity; and a time before us when sin itself shall be cleansed and conquered, and "they shall not sorrow any more at all."

Or pass from pain and sin to the tender realm of the affections. "The play of the affections," so it has been said, "makes the happiness of life." When we think of this, it is like emerging with the great Poet and his guide from the realm of darkness into the light of the tender dawn. Before us is "the trembling of the sea," and the angel's wings are almost seen across the waters with "her face like a benediction."* We are surely now in a land of soft breezes and fair and changeful lights and opening flowers. "Love" is the last word between man and man, between man and woman, between man and God. "Love" is the very image of the Eternal, the brightness of life, the reflection on earth of the splendour of heaven. Love, which can give account of all things, which is the key that opens every door,

* Dante, *Purgatorio*, Canto i.

and gives a colour to the heavens and a tenderness to music, and a soul to poetry, and an inner sunshine to the soul. Can it be dashed with sorrow? Brethren, need I answer, it can? There are the awful shadows of sin even here. The misunderstandings which nothing can remove; the envy that blights, the jealousy which distorts, the misrepresentation which undermines! And even when it is perfect and placid as a work of art, what then? The bridal train moves on with brightening sunlight and with showers of flowers. And then, anon, the funeral bell is tolling, and the orange blossom changes to the cypress, and the smile of gladness to the burning tear, and the flush of what seemed an everlasting sunlight to the darkness and misery of the grave.

We part on earth. The warmest hands must be unclasped; the eyes which carried messages of sincerest faithfulness must close. Just now we listened to a voice which spoke the accents of a soul carrying joy and blessedness to ours; just now it seemed as if the sun must always shine, as if a May were always May, a June were always June. Those little arms were round your neck; that little lad was on your knee; that voice was saying, "How I love you!" And what was all the world, when this was so, to you?

There is a stillness now. Some awful distance has come between. Miles, miles, and miles of stretching sea, and with them changing circumstances and advancing years; or

> Death has put so far apart,
> We cannot hear each other speak.

How terrible! "Tears, idle tears; we know not what they mean." Only the anguish of torn hearts and broken lives, and sunlight emptied of its brightness, and joy of its meaning. Think, only think! A time is coming when perfect beauty, perfect tenderness, and everlasting union shall be ours; when partings never more can torture love; when life is love, and death is dead; when "their soul shall be as a watered garden, and they shall not sorrow any more at all."

III.

For, indeed, the true glory of that future is that we feel it will be *real* life.

This world, say what we may, is full of unreality. At times we are tempted to imagine that it is little else than a deluding dream; it may at any moment vanish away. So much which at first seems solid turns out to be evanescent; so much that made large promises has presented us with small returns.

So often we fancy we have reached the goal of aspiration, and then, like travellers in a land of mountains, we have discovered that *each* point which *seemed* the final resting-place of achievement, is only a tiny vantage-ground from which to survey the mightier magnitude of a more distant and receding peak. We are, indeed, in a land of shadows. Nothing evidences our nobility or bears testimony to the greatness of our possible future so much as the way in which we start, and are arrested and charmed when, in the rare intervals in the life of an unreal world, we are conscious, at least for the moment, of having touched *reality*.

Amid the vast multitude of *simulacra* and shams which crowd the ranks of mankind, what a real joy to touch a *real* character! Amid the crowd of customs and *conveniances* meant to conceal the facts of life, how sweet to become conscious of one who is playing no part, acting no character, posing in no position, but in self-forgetfulness simply and sincerely loving others and loving truth! What a thrill of delight we feel when such an experience is ours!

Imagine the politician—if such can be imagined—who cares nothing for the trammels of party, who is always fair-minded and just and guided by principle; who loves to serve his country, and has never lent

his energies to deceive the people ; who sees the right, and makes for it unswervingly, without false methods, or untruthful pretences, or swallowing his principles, or denying his convictions ; without fawning on the populace or asking to be led by those whom it is his duty to lead ! Think, if *per impossible* in such a world of sham and falseness as this, you *could* meet such, how you would salute him ! How you would admire !

Think of the ecclesiastic who never played to the gallery, or trimmed his sails, or tried to balance himself on the rail of expediency, but *really* acted in the fearless sense of being a messenger of God, really felt "if I yet please men, how shall I be the servant of Christ"? How you would respect him, how you would salute him !

Think, if you met the Dissenting minister who cared really for spiritual truth, and nothing for the cliquishness of his sect ; whose desire was to advance the kingdom of goodness, the kingdom of Christ, not to produce social upheaving or to strike a blow at the Church—how you would venerate, even if you differed !

Think, could you find the great lady in the West End, who—amidst all the opportunities of luxury and wealth—was really thinking not how to rival others where rank and wealth gave *them* opportuni-

ties, but how to make others happy, and faithfully and steadily deny herself—how you would respect, how admire!

Ah! dear friends, in this bad world these characters do not grow on the hedges like blackberries. They are, alas! they are hard to find. Secretly and hiddenly, and in unknown crannies of life, here and there, such are to be found. But we are "mixed" creatures. By the grace of God, there is much that is good; alas, for the Fall! there is much that is evil. We live in a world of appearances. We live in a country where respectability, not thoroughness, is the golden god. Appearance is one thing; reality, believe me, is quite another. But amidst our pettinesses, and falsenesses, and corruptions, and pretentiousness, and untruth, there is this much nobility left in us. When we see reality we can't but admire it, and in our better moments we look on with satisfaction and thanksgiving to a *real* life.

"Their soul shall be as a watered garden, and they shall not sorrow any more at all." Here, alas! in at least the majority of lives, there are many crossing and mixed motives. The weaknesses of self-interest, of class, and place, and calling, these come in and confuse the final cast of character. Even in the best, even in the saints themselves, on earth, were those

blots and shadows which take away from the charm and beauty of a soul.

Once, only once, certainly once, there was a great exception to the law of failure. Once, indeed, dear friends, was seen among the families of men a perfect life. Once was a life fit to rouse our admiration, and to offer us a pattern which we might imitate. Once, but only once, was a character without flaw, entirely harmonious and free from any mark of limitation, so that it showed man in the perfection of his *universal* ideal. And how was He received? So enamoured were men of their make-believes and pretences, they rose in wrath against that beautiful reality. And yet, as age after age has passed away, more and more the family of man has wakened up to at least respectful admiration of its great Representative. So great we are, so born for better things, that in the midst of all the shows and mere appearances of life, we cannot but admire "the highest when we see it," we cannot close our eyes to the beauty of the great fact.

Think, then, only think what it will be when the shadows shall have passed and the substance be clear. Think when misunderstanding shall have become impossible, and separation a thing not to be known. When joy shall have no dark streaks of fearful forecast, and achievement shall not be marred

in its satisfaction by any fear of after fall! Think, only think, what it will be when we shall believe without a possibility of doubting, shall hope with the strong anticipation of a dawning certainty, shall love with a passionate enthusiasm, but with no touch of passionate self-seeking; with a tender devotion, but with no dashing dread of a possible parting; with the joy—the unutterable joy—of a pure affection, without one faintest shadow of approaching change. Think, only think, when our nobler moments and our higher moods, our clearer visions and our truer thoughts, our brighter gleams of happiness, and our sweeter and stronger energies of self-forgetting shall represent the minimum, the lower level, the first step, not the final successes of our character and life! When our love shall be without apprehension, our energy without fear of failure, our onward march without temptation, and our steady and certain choice without a stain of sin! Think, only think, when trouble and toil and labour and sadness shall be ended; when sham and show and failure and deceit shall have shrunk to the thinness of a dream, and instead of them the great reality! When that which "eye hath not seen nor ear heard" shall be ours in certain attainment and entire possession, and Christ shall be all in all!

Brethren, *that* lies before each of us if we will.

that reality of blessedness, as certainly as any fact of ordinary life. For that we ought to hope; for that we may certainly live; that, and nothing less than that, is put before us by the Christian Faith. Surely our lives may be raised and toned and comforted, and even governed, by the more habitual remembrance of the end of human sadness, when "their soul shall be as a watered garden, and they shall not sorrow any more at all."

IV.

If, then, my friends, we may justly look forward to such a moment, what are some of the consequences to us here and now?

(1) Surely we shall have to treat life a little more —at least in our ways of thinking and feeling about it -as a journey. It *is* such. It is a pilgrimage. In many ways and for many reasons we get into the habit of thinking of things as they are, as though they always would be the same. We *know* they will not, yet we *feel* as if they would. One real result of having to look on to the end of sorrow is that we have more and more to think and feel about life, as in fact it is, as a journey. It is certain that the Apostles looked upon it in that way. I do not mean that we can pretend for a moment to rise to the

height of apostolic greatness, but if their lives and examples and teachings mean anything, they mean that we can follow them by using the principles which governed them, and looking at things from the point of view from which they viewed them.

There has been—as I have ventured to say to you before now—a reaction against the supernatural teaching of the Church, because there was an unreal way of speaking of the other world from the pulpit which seemed to imply that this world was nothing. This world is not nothing; but certainly, also, it is not everything. "Other-worldliness" may have run wild, but "this-worldliness" threatens at present to run wilder still. St. Paul, unquestionably, preached of life as being a pilgrimage, and the Bible from first to last deals with it as such; and what is more, the facts of life, which lie before us, make this view entirely incontrovertible. If we keep our eyes habitually fixed upon the end of sorrow, we shall learn to treat life as such. We shall not be less keen about the interests of the moment, or less diligent about daily duties, but we shall take the joys and the inconveniences of life as they come in a freer and nobler and more untrammelled spirit, as travellers take the inconveniences and pleasures of a foreign country through which they are passing with cheerfulness and good temper, when beyond them all, they

are looking to the end of their journey. Keep the eye of faith fixed upon the end of sorrow, and more you will learn to treat life as a pilgrimage.

(2) And, further, this I am sure will lead you to treat Hope as a duty. Of course, in religion Faith is indispensable. Of course it is unnecessary to say that, without Love, without charity, we are nothing; but we scarcely realise the greatness and necessity of the virtue of Hope. Our age, and indeed our nation, need it above all. In the presence of life, as it is in the confusion of contradictory teachings, in the hubbub of the world, in the vanishing of ideals, in the failure of schemes, we need, if we need anything, that strong moral effort, that high moral purpose, resting on God's promises, grounded on God's goodness—an unconquerable and indomitable hope. Brethren, we must not play with it, we must not, if we are trying to be Christians at all, fail to remember that despondency is not only cowardly—it is wrong; and as this is so—if we trust God—in relation to things of this life, how much more is it so when we remember the unimagined wonders of peace and blessedness that are prepared for us, if we will have them, in the kingdom of God. If, as a spiritual habit, we keep our eye fixed on the end of sorrow as a spiritual energy, we shall learn more and more to practise the duty of hope.

And here I have done. Labour and sorrow! Labour and sorrow! Yes, this is, indeed, a description of the life of us all; but the labour may be turned to God's glory and the benefit of others, and the labour and the sorrow may be, if we will have it so, the means of training our characters for a higher life. We may be tempted to let ourselves go with the stream of worldliness and the current of sin. Let it not be so. Struggle hard. Fight manfully. Work diligently. Bear sorrow with resignation. Above all, persevere. All is not lost by being a Christian. With all its difficulties, life is brighter for those who love God. There is a Christ who died for us. There is the power of prayer. There are the mysterious forces of the Sacraments. There is a Spirit that sanctifies. There is the Church, the home of the lonely, the home in which we receive grace. We are born for a better country. Let us live under the sense of our immortality. Let us look upward and onward still.

Labour and sorrow! Yes, that is the description of this life, but it is written, "There is a rest that remaineth;" and further, it is written, "Their soul shall be as a watered garden, and they shall not sorrow any more at all."

THE OUTLOOK OF THE SOUL

"I am the resurrection and the life."—JOHN xi. 25.

THE OUTLOOK OF THE SOUL

HERE is one of those marvellous announcements which make the teaching of Christ unlike—not in degree only, but in kind—that of any other teacher who has ever lived. The scene is full of sadness and sorrow. The death-scene of Lazarus is over. The heart-broken sisters are feeling the sharp trial of bereavement—common, sooner or later, to us all. The most striking and awe-inspiring of the miracles of our Master is on the point of being wrought, when He asserts Himself in word to be that which He showed Himself in deed—the Master of death, the Conqueror of the grave.

There is more than that. Our Lord here teaches in definite terms what elsewhere He, and His Apostles after Him, emphatically insisted upon—the outlook of the soul, the immortality of man. On few truths, dear friends, can we dwell to greater purpose. To take a truth for granted is

one thing; to *dwell* upon it for practical purposes is quite another. The mind which, under the guidance of God's Spirit, habituates itself to dwell upon immortal life, gains a certain calmness and elevation which are quite invaluable for the growth of moral character in the history of the soul. Life indeed is, in a real sense, "labour and sorrow"; but in proportion as the labour is felt to be heavy, and the sorrow is felt to be keen, in that proportion it is wise, it is soothing, it is supporting, to realise a clear outlook for the soul, to hold with a practical grip the truth of life beyond the grave.

I.

That this truth, indeed, has haunted the chambers of the human heart, in some form or other, for ages, cannot be doubted. The ideas, however, on the subject were vague and thin. If we look at the intimations as to immortality contained in the Old Testament, even they are cloudy. It is true that underneath the great statements of the prophets, as well as the teachings of holy men in the old dispensation, there flowed a deep current of thought which implied this truth; for, indeed, a belief in the living God, such as is taught in the Old Testament, does imply it. But there was

nothing coherent and distinct on the subject, and there are passages, especially in the Psalms, which seem to tell the other way. The belief was evidently held in a measure, but somewhat dimly and without its natural practical importance, by many holy souls; and it seemed to grow more distinct as time went on, as is witnessed by a celebrated passage in the Book of the Maccabees which recommends the devout practice of praying for the dead. The truth of immortality has somehow or other gone very deep into the heart of man, even though held with varying strength and exactness; and we have the authority of the New Testament for the fact that it was brought into clear light only by the teaching and acting of Jesus Christ our Lord.

To Greek and Roman thought the idea of this truth was not wanting, but still it was very vague.

There is one notable exception, or partial exception, to this; there is that celebrated discourse which has been described as an example of "heroic faith," which accompanies Socrates' death-scene in the "Phædo" of Plato. There the argument for immortality is stated with all the fairness and all the force that was possible in a mind which could not be acquainted with many modern discoveries that throw light upon it, and, above all, was not illu-

minated by the direct revelation given by Jesus Christ to the Church. There are arguments in the "Phædo" which appear to us little more than verbal; there are arguments which rest upon the theory of knowledge taught by Socrates; there are arguments also drawn from his theory of pre-existence, grounded upon certain facts of memory. But the remarkable part of that remarkable dialogue is, that the real prevailing arguments are of an ethical character.

Socrates really argues immortality from an "instinctive confidence" in the soul that it must be imperishable. He also feels the force of those longings of affection which are such powerful arguments for the reality of a life beyond the grave. He felt—and in a measure all pure souls have felt in all time—what has been more clearly maintained in Christendom, the force of human love making the hope of immortality more distinct, and thereby really supplying an argument in favour of the truth. He felt also the demands of justice, that greater criminals should somehow be punished whom no power of punishment could reach in this world. He felt the authoritative force of conscience, reminding even good men that they are not entirely innocent. But he felt more than all this. He argued the truth of immortality, above all, from

the existence of eternal ideas of which the soul is a partaker.

Plato's doctrine of ideas may have been—to a certain extent doubtless was—fanciful. It has been truly observed, however, that if we translate the language of Socrates in this matter into such language as we should use now, it becomes one of the most powerful arguments for immortality that has ever affected the mind of man. Plato or Socrates, whom he reports, would argue, "if the ideas of men are eternal, their souls, which possess the ideas, are eternal." We should go on and say, "the existence of right and truth and love is, in fact, the existence of God, and cannot be separated from Him. We are as certain of the ideas of right and truth and love as we are of our own existence; we are then certain of the existence of God, and if God exists, then the soul exists after death." That is to say, if for Plato's eternal ideas we substitute "God," we have in his argument for immortality one very strong argument which commends itself to Christians now. But of this I will speak more by-and-bye. Though Socrates was wanting in the instruction of direct Christian revelation, he was not wanting (in the incomparable death-scene of the "Phædo") in the "light that lighteneth every man that cometh into the world."

II.

It would seem that, as far as the outlook of the soul goes, there was, indeed, a revelation of immortality *underlying* the inspired teachings of the Old Testament, but only partially "brought to light" in the minds of even holy men then. It would seem that the thought had haunted the ancient nations who were outside the frontiers of the chosen people, and that among the greater minds, and especially in the mind of that wonderful man whose teaching we have just noticed, the thought took something like more distinct shape, and tried to find its ground in reasonable argument. On the whole, however, even in Greek and Roman antiquity, anything like a belief in individual immortality had a very loose hold upon the minds of men, and certainly did not supply a principle for practical action.

Among the Romans, Cicero, when he is pleading, as a great orator and lawyer, jeers at the whole notion. It has been acutely remarked that a public speaker of this kind "addresses himself to the general standard of human feeling and opinion." As the Roman world was going rapidly on from the Republic to the Empire, it is clear, therefore, that the general opinion of mankind was not, to say the least of it, strongly influenced by this belief. Things, moral and social and spiritual,

were then on the decline. The horrors and miseries, side by side with the dazzling civilisation of the Empire, were coming upon mankind. Increasing corruption, doubtless, tended to loosen any inclination towards such a belief. But it is also true to say that this practical absence of such a belief helped towards the demoralisation and deepened the corruption. At the time, indeed, men had lost God; "there was wanted the consciousness of sanctity of God, and the need of sanctification in man" in the vast majority of mankind. In proportion as a man loses God he loses himself: let him cease to have a knowledge of God, and he ceases to have a knowledge of his personality and his own soul.

In so far as men thought on the subject at all in the closing days of the old world of Roman civilisation, they thought of death as a sleep, in which at least they were delivered from the depression and despair that were creeping over the higher class of minds; or as an unhappy but inevitable termination to the mere worldliness and sensuality which formed the staple of the enjoyments of life to the larger number of men. In so far as immortality was thought of at all, it was rather felt that if the soul survived the shock of death, it was no longer individual and personal with its own joys and sorrows, but became absorbed in a kind of world-soul. In fact, so far as immor-

tality was believed in then, it seems to have been rather in the form of a pantheistic dream.

In spite, then, of the haunting sense of something like another world, there was nothing definite and nothing practical about it. Nobody guided his life by it ; nobody lived in the light of it ; nobody looked forward to it, and was practically affected by it in the concerns of this world. The fact is, dear friends, that any distinct and practical sense of an immortal life, as the outlook of a soul, is wrapt up in our belief in a personal God, in whom we live and move and have our being, and who is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

III.

Every view of Christianity of course points towards the truth of this doctrine. But more than that, surely everything that can be called Natural Religion leads in the same direction. To consider death as a necessary phænomenon in human history is of course forced upon all mankind. The first thing which strikes the observer is the tremendous material revolution. What has been going on with such unvarying regularity is subjected to a startling change. A machine, which has worked so regularly and finely for a purpose, ceases its work altogether, and passes away swiftly so that it ceases to be. At

first we are tempted to conclude that, as the machine had its work to do, and as its specific work must be over because *it* itself is destroyed, therefore, *everything* connected with its action must have ceased entirely to be. The materialist, therefore, decides that thought is only composed of phosphorus, and that memory and will and so on are nothing more than results and evidences of electrical discharges in the brain. If this were so, then death would of course mean an utter end, and immortality would represent simply a superstition and a baseless dream.

One thing, however, it has been felt, is not accounted for. There is in the human being a *consciousness* which, however connected with the human frame in life, has also evidently a strange independence of it, and has to do with something behind and beyond what is merely material in the body. It has been pointed out, and with truth I think, that this is plain enough to us by the simplest facts of experience.* A good example is that of the effect of speech upon a human being. Take two sentences which require the action of a similar number of waves of air through the ear upon the brain: if the whole thing be only *material*, like causes would produce like effects, but the one sentence soothes and calms the listener, and the other throws him into an agony of despair.

* By Dr. Martineau.

The *meaning* of the sentence has to be taken into account, as well as the actual volume of physical sound which expresses it. "Your friend is very well" may produce an effect of calmness on the being to whom it is addressed. "Your friend is very ill" will produce an effect of an entirely opposite character. The meaning contained in the words is addressed to a *consciousness* which lies behind the material body, and belongs to a class of invisible phænomena which to a great extent elude exact investigation. If there be in man, then, a power which lies behind and beyond his material frame, death may indeed mean that the immediate evidences of that power are withdrawn from our observation, but it cannot mean that that which belongs to another class of phænomena, and not to physical phænomena, must itself perish, because the immediate evidence of it to us, who are in the body, has passed away.

And this conclusion, which brings us at least so far as to recognise the probability of immortality, is immensely strengthened by what we do know of what may be called the immaterial life of man, from our own experience of fundamental ideas.

If we are certain of anything, above and beyond argument, which we are sure admits of no sort of contradiction, we are certain of our own individual, single, personal self or soul. To doubt this would be

impossible. It is lifted out of the sphere of reasoning and argument. All we can say about it is to deny it is out of the question consistently with any seriousness. Whatever we might choose to say, there it is. There each one stands with the central self, fixed and determined, looking out, so to speak, from its impregnable fortress upon all else passing by it in a great onward-flowing stream of change. It has watched Nature change in a thousand different ways as the years have swept along. Circumstances have changed; men have come upon the stage and disappeared; friends have arisen and passed away; the body itself, its own habitation, has altered in a thousand ways; the very thoughts of the mind have expanded or shrunk, and gained or lost force or value; nay, the individual character has altered. Change upon change, the scene exterior and internal is a scene of incessant change; but here is this *self*, this soul, looking out upon it all the time, and it at least is a permanent fact. It cannot but feel that as its permanence has not been affected by the constant changes which it has witnessed, so it has every reason to believe that it will not be affected by the change of which it will be a witness when "its earthly house of this its tabernacle be dissolved," by the tremendous change of death. And what each of us must feel in this way about our own being, we

are forced to feel about others, and to have a considerable confidence, to say the least of it, that all does not end with the grave.

But all moralists have felt, except those who have mixed themselves up with the ideas of Spinoza and the teachings of Pantheism, that the consciousness of a personal self in each of us in this life lends a much greater probability to immortality than to the strange notion that the individual is absorbed after death into "the great All." Some teachers, especially in Germany, have actually put forward the view (as in some sense a Christian view) that to lose individual personal immortality is really to conquer self and selfishness, and to put a stop to all separation from God. In this sort of argument there is such a transparent fallacy that it is difficult to imagine how any one can be taken in by it. In one sense, of course, we must sacrifice self, but we who make this sacrifice mean by the "self" which we sacrifice all that is in us of base, and bad, and ungodly. In another sense we who offer the sacrifice are ourselves a "self," which of course is not sacrificed. It is a mere play upon a word, and the employment of a trick of language to defend the Pantheistic doctrine of absorption in this way as against the Christian doctrine of immortality.

IV.

But there are other considerations on the same subject which have told on the minds of philosophers. Even the men who are least friendly to the direct teachings of the Catholic Church cannot close their eyes to the evident facts which are presented to us by the consideration of the character of God and of the character of man. Religion, strictly speaking, is the recognition of the tie or relation between God and man. To be religious at all we must recognise the meaning given to man's endowments by the God who made him. There is sure to be some sort of proportion between the faculties which man possesses and the work which those faculties have to do. If we turn to the intellectual faculties we find that man, by the creation of literature, is constantly in a kind of mental communion with those who have gone. Shakespeare and Dante are teaching us all. It seems in the highest degree improbable that our living thoughts are being shaped and swayed by beings who have passed entirely out of existence. Why, again, should we take such keen interest in the history of the past, and take sides and feel the passionate enthusiasm for one, and passionate reprobation towards another, if they have utterly ceased to be? You cannot feel your whole being stirred

again and again towards a storm or a gleam of sunlight, with indignation or love, as they pass across and vanish from the stretching heavens. Why should we look forward with such keen interest to the future of our race here in this world, and to the progress of peoples, if each generation is a mere transient bubble on a rushing stream which holds its own with precarious patience for a moment, and then bursts and vanishes away? Why should we travel in thought and investigation through illimitable space? Why rise with such boundless aspirations towards high things both in art and religion, if there is no real kinship between our own souls and those high things which are in fact eternal? The deep joy and the strong attraction of which we are conscious when we are under the influence of genius, when we gaze at the graceful results of the chisel of Pheidias, or the rich colouring of Titian, or the anatomical power by the pencil or brush of Angelo, or listen to the joyous strains of Mendelssohn, or the pathetic harmonies of Spohr, or the awe-inspiring chords of Beethoven, or are dazzled or subdued by Dante's vision, or moved by Shakespeare's characters to laughter or to tears—what does it mean? Why the real joy and satisfaction is that we feel that we are touching on the truth of things, and instincts within us tell that the truth of things can never vanish. Is it pro-

bable that that fine creation, the human soul, so formed as to rejoice in them, can itself then vanish at all? There is no doubt about it; thoughtful men again and again have felt it in all times that our intellectual capacities are too keen, too sensitive, too far-reaching, to be meant for use *only* for a few passing years; that we are too richly endowed with mental faculty if we are only to last for the space of our bodily life here; that all proportion is destroyed between the instrument which is placed in our possession, and the work that it has to do, unless we are allowed to believe that there is a life beyond the grave.*

And what are we to say of that mysterious endowment of conscience which, account for it as you may, will not leave you alone? It insists on speaking with authority. It judges actions so far as they are moral; that is, so far as they depend upon deliberate choice. It tries by an external and ideal standard. It teaches the soul to arrange for and expect the satisfaction of justice. It insists, whether we like it or not, upon something like retribution. It gives to the awakened soul, wherever things have been wrong, a real desire to make restitution in some sort, a real longing for punishment in some measure, even when, side by side with that, there is a loving desire for forgiveness.

* This is powerfully and at length worked out by Dr. Martineau, in *A Study of Religion*.

It makes us feel that if things are wrong in this world, this life is a great deal too short to put them entirely right. In the interest of truth and justice, it demands a life beyond the grave.

And I insist that still more strongly does the doctrine of immortality gain probability and consistency when we turn to the region of the affections. Love is the last word between man and man, between man and woman, between man and God. However sullied the honour of so great a name may have been in human history by its application to bastard things that have no legitimate relation to the great family of noble affections, still such a thing as real love the human heart knows that there is. The very travesties of it prove its reality. The false figures which masquerade in garments meant to imitate its kingly robes remind us that there are the royal robes, and that there is the king.

Love is the noblest, the deepest, the most intense possession of the high and unselfish side of human character, and it reaches far beyond the possibilities of this short life. Did any one ever yet dare to say that they would love their friend, their wife, their husband, their sweetheart, their child, for just so long a time, and then that love should cease to be? By the exigencies of its very nature it takes for granted that it is eternal. Whenever it is true and

noble -and, indeed, in proportion to its nobility and truth—it deepens and strengthens as the days go on. It implies, all the more the truer and nobler it is, the interlinking and interdependence of thought and heart and character. This is apart from all mere external circumstances; it is a phænomenon of our being—soul linked with soul; it is a spiritual fact, not a temporal one. And what has it to do with the chance and passing accidents of space and time? The stars may shine in brightness or be wrapped in gloom. Two living beings may be with joy together, or separated with sadness by a vast expanse of rolling sea; the sun may be shining above them, or the storms may be out; variations of joy or sorrow may pass over them according to the blessings or trials of life—the blessings of nearness, or the trials of separation; but one thing remains untouched by circumstance, unsubdued by change; soul is bound to soul—*they love*. Here is a phænomenon above all changeful accident; here is a fact perfectly human, yet really divine; here is an assertion, if ever there can be one, of eternity; here is a power which smiles, even if it be through tears, at the accident of death. Love, the strongest as well as the most lovely thing known to human experience, is "as strong as death"—nay, stronger; and it asserts the life beyond the grave.

v.

But the outlook of the soul for us Christians is guaranteed by evidence even stronger than any we have yet considered. Ask yourself for a moment on what is it that any Catholic—speaking, I mean, from external evidence—grounds his faith? Is not the answer something of this sort? He sees around him a world, wonderful, beautiful, mysterious, which cannot have made itself. He notices in himself a power of will; he is led to the conception of a living cause, *i.e.*, of a personal God. Further, he notices also in himself a power of personal affection, and a delight in human intercourse with those he sees around him, as well as a mysterious yearning for intercourse with some one unseen and above himself. Water does not rise above its source. He concludes that that first cause, that personal God, must also have some such affections, and is sure to desire to have intercourse with him. He finds in many ways, according to the testimony of others, as well as the testimony of his own soul, that that intercourse does take place. Still it is dim and distant, and he is longing for something more definite as a proof of the facts, the truth of which he suspects. Suddenly he finds himself no longer in the region of speculation, but in the region of

history. He finds that without question One man has appeared on the stage of the world declaring Himself to be God, showing to men what God is like, and presenting Himself in His own person as the Revelation of the Father. He finds that all this is borne out by the strangeness of His life and work, and by the unapproachable beauty of His character. He finds that, whilst unable to make man understand all the reasons of human trouble and human sorrow, He at least plunged into that trouble and sorrow Himself, so as to show man that if only he were true to himself, and true to divine teachings, it would be all right. He finds that, as His final human achievement He founded a society; that with that society, in spite of many ups and downs, and quarrels and sins, to which it would be subjected in the long course of its history, He promised that He would be invisibly present Himself. He finds that that society, therefore, is a steady witness to and proclaimer of, the Truth. The Catholic Church existing and teaching, is the authority on which he relies. Even amidst divisions and troubles that which is witnessed to in common by every part of the apostolically organised body is "the truth as it is in Jesus." Well, the Catholic Church takes possession of the future. It teaches each of its children that their capacity for excellence depends

upon their efforts to live *in* the present *for* the future. It asserts our immortality. It declares that a life of unimagined wonder, a life beyond the grave, is the outlook of the soul.

But more. The very ground, historically speaking, for believing in the mission and teaching of Jesus Christ, the seal that was placed upon His proclamations, the reason why, apart from His wonderful character, we believe, as reasonable beings, that He is what He asserted Himself to be, is the fact that He rose from the dead. That fact cannot be questioned except on *a priori* grounds; and *a priori* arguments, as to matters of fact, are not arguments for reasonable beings. If we go into the region of historical evidence, we have stronger proof of the resurrection of Jesus Christ than we have of the battle of Cannae. If He rose from the dead, what He taught is true; the society he founded is to be believed; and both by His own words and by the teaching of that society corroborated, as we have seen, by the interior witness of our own nature—and by His example, making the thing plain at the first Easter Day, we are taught that the outlook of the soul is a life beyond the grave.

VI.

Brethren, from such thoughts there are practical consequences. A steady habit of remembering the real reach of life will have enormous influence upon our acts and characters. It is not to be denied that in many ways this is difficult. We live in the midst of a vast system of things—things by no means bad in themselves, things for most of which we may well be thankful, things related to civilisation in such a way as to affect our comfort and happiness, things touching trade and commerce and art and ordinary everyday existence, all which seem to depend upon the assumption that the life of this world is everything. We cannot, however, allow ourselves to look merely at the surface. However even and easy-going the ordinary ways of life may be, we have not to look very deep to find that, with all alleviations, life is full of desperate misery, that this world is a world of unsatisfied longings, and that all the discoveries systems, and civilisations that we boast of have never yet succeeded in destroying sin, or sickness, or heart-ache, or sorrow, or in throwing back the frontiers of the grave. There may be difficulties in trying to shape life under the government of the thought of the life to come, but anyhow it is reasonable to try to do so. It means looking facts in the face. It means

dealing with things as they are. It means not closing our eyes to the inevitable, but taking it into account, and giving it due weight and due proportion, which is surely playing the part of sensible and thoughtful men.

To keep before us the real outlook of the soul, dear friends, is to refuse persistently to drift with the stream. We have to take care to watch wisely and sternly over our own wills; to keep our eye upon the springs of our actions; to be careful about the decisions we make; and to be earnest in watching against mere slackness of will in carrying out those decisions which we know to be right. Wherever we stand we must learn to recognise our own greatness as immortals, and respect ourselves accordingly. Very attractive things in life before now have glamoured us and thrown their spells over us. Why should we not be glamoured? why should we not be brought under the spell of the great thought of immortality? If we are, this life and all the little details of its service become infinitely more important, and duty will be more carefully and diligently done. If we are, we shall realise more perfectly that the true and only preparation for that other world is the discipline and formation of character. If we are, then far above learning, or reputation, or inventiveness, or research, will rise in our estimation the one great science, the science of goodness. If

we are, religion will come first; conscience will be cared for; we shall be severe with, and watchful over, ourselves; God will be our great and soul-subduing thought; there will be an awe in life; but there will also be a dignity and majesty. There will be more than either of these. We shall feel the need and the delight in Himself, in His glorious character, in His ready example, in His gracious manner to ourselves, by the whispers of His spirit in the solemn and blessed moments of devotion, and in the mysterious ordinances of His Church—of Him who "brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel," of Him who has made clear to all of us the real outlook of the soul by declaring Himself "the Resurrection and the Life." In view of our immortality, we shall lean upon Him more and more, and learn from Him that sorrows and trials and anxieties and cares cannot overthrow a soul which they are only meant to train, and learn from Him that it is not what we do or what we have, but what we *are*, that is everything; and so leaning on Him, and learning from Him, and looking forward amidst the joys and the toils of our pilgrimage, then the immortal outlook of the soul will be a strength and a help to us:

> And the night shall be filled with music
> And the cares which infest the day,
> Shall fold their tents like the Arabs,
> And as silently steal away.

RELIGION AND ART

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."—St. James i. 17.

RELIGION AND ART

ST. JAMES has generally been considered what may be called a "practical" Apostle. He deals with broad principles in a short and pithy way. He enforces practical duties in a clear and direct manner. Certain religious thinkers, as we all know, were so impressed with his mode of dealing with spiritual questions, that they went the length of maintaining that his teaching was contradictory to that of St. Paul. A really careful study of the life of the two Apostles proves this to be untrue. It remains, however, that, as is naturally to be expected, St. James has his own method of thought and his own style of expression. His teachings are direct and practical, and he is fond of announcing broad principles which are capable of being applied to many different departments of life. We do well indeed, dear friends, to remember that, whatever be the right definition of inspiration in Holy Scripture, it does not interfere with the natural characteristics,

or bent of mind, or intellectual equipment, or style of expression, of each writer. Almighty God seems to have given different degrees, and even different kinds of inspiration, to men whom He has used as means for expressing truth. The kind of inspiration, as well as the degree of it, is a very different thing in the case of the sacred writers from what may be called inspirations of genius; but in both cases the illumination or teaching from God does not appear to deal with man as though he were a mere machine, but uses his natural gifts while adding to them something quite beyond.

I.

The text before us takes a wide sweep. It is not, therefore I trust, irreverent or in any way contrary to truth to apply its teaching to some of those inspirations of genius which are, indeed, very different from the inspirations of the writers of the sacred Scriptures.

It may not be possible for us, indeed, to define with exactness the nature of goodness. We know enough about it to feel now that it is the very highest thing, that in its true and full sense it expresses the very nature and texture of the character of God Himself; that we cannot deal with it lightly, or talk of it

flippantly, or imagine ourselves to be perfectly at home in the vast and beautiful mysteries which are involved in it. We are unable to travel into the deepest depths of light, and see in a moment all the combinations and causes which lie behind the pompous pageantry of a sunset sky. We cannot in a moment take in all the marvellous movements which make the boundless sea at one time speak to us with solemn awe and terrible foreboding, at another time sing to us quieting lullabies, or recite to us poems of inexpressible peace. We cannot in a moment analyse the meaning of strong convictions, or deep and pure affections, or the hidden workings of a great character or a gifted mind. But we have general impressions and general informations about these things, which we feel pretty sure are not wrong, although they may be not exhaustive, or, in fact, insufficient.

So we do well to beware of imagining that we know all about "goodness"; we do well to exercise necessary humility, and not to attempt to talk too glibly about so great a thing, as though we understood it all. And yet there are fundamental conceptions in our minds which do not betray us, and help to lead us along the path of truth. We have a fair working idea for all practical purposes of what is meant by "every good gift and every

perfect gift." Religion is *the* great thing of life. The tie between the soul of man and God ought to be realised as the first chief fact; but there are many gifts which, though not directly religious, may yet minister to religion. There are many that are good gifts, even though they appear to be very closely connected with this life and only loosely connected with another, yet have a vast influence upon man, and must find some shelter under religion itself.

Such a good gift is Art. Of this I would speak as being one of those blessings to human life which comes down from the Father of lights. This great gift, whatever form it takes, either in sculpture, painting, literature, or music, is something to be thankful for and be rightly used. Our own age, as I suppose all are agreed, is not an age of the highest art. "Good gifts" indeed we have, but it cannot be doubted that, on the whole, they are more scientific and mechanical, and enter less into the region of Beauty. Our best sculptors, painters, architects stand scarcely higher than the rank of successful imitators. The ages which produced Phidias and Praxiteles, or the ages of the great Italian painters, or the ages which gave birth to the great mediæval cathedrals of Europe, are utterly gone. In these departments we are admirers or imitators of ances-

tors who have long passed away. Music, however, is an art in which the modern world has far surpassed the ancient; and this century and last century have had more of this "good gift" than men ever had before. Again, in Literature, there seems to be a wide range of artistic power, extending through all time. The exquisite literature of Greece and Rome is not more wonderful in its way than the literature of Germany, Italy, and England. Here and there all down the ages there stand out giants in what may be called literary art—a Sophocles, a Plato, a Virgil, a Goethe, a Dante, a Cervantes, a Victor Hugo, a Shakespeare, and in our own times a Tennyson, a Browning; and round these there cluster the names of lesser workers of no mean quality. So that if we include under the general title of Art, literary power as well, we may fairly assert that we are not without this "good gift" in any one of its departments in our own days, and that in some of them we have it in a very high degree.

II.

It cannot but appear to a Christian that if Art is to be in any measure what it ought to be, it must be in some true sense religious. Using the word Art,

then, in the widest sense to include literature, there is unquestionably a tendency in our own time to glorify "realism" in opposition to "idealism." This, I venture to think, is a grave mistake : it sometimes indicates the existence of a spirit very far from religious, and one cannot but think that there is a grave danger of its producing a temper of mind, and moral habits, very far from good.

For, consider, Nature in its wide sense is one great sacrament. In a sacrament there is an outward sign, and behind that an inner fact. The outward appearances of the natural world which meet our eye are not everything ; they suggest to us—surely they are meant to suggest to us—unseen realities. St. Paul himself reminds us that He who is "without variableness, neither shadow of turning," has left to us in material nature a witness and teacher of His "eternal power and godhead." There is something, we cannot doubt, in the mind of man which enables him to interpret Nature. Man uses Nature for practical purposes, masses of water, of earth, of stone, forces of electric currents and winds, are made his servants. Nature in its utilitarian aspect is felt to be a vast machine, or a vast storehouse of materials.

There is, however, another aspect of Nature : in man there is such a thing as the sense of

beauty, which rises to the height of a passion for the beautiful, and the beauty of Nature, as well as its usefulness, has taken possession of the human mind. That wonderful beauty has been felt more and more to be in itself a revelation through Nature, quite apart from mechanical usefulness. This sense of beauty has been more developed, as we know, in the modern mind than among the ancients; strange to say among ourselves, side by side with the advance of physical science, there has also, up to comparatively recent times, been an advance in the sense, the important sense, of the power of beauty in Nature as a distinct revelation. May we not fear, however, that physical science of late—notwithstanding all its real benefits and blessings—has been tending to corrupt this sense of beauty, and to injure one of our "good gifts," by injuring our idealism in Art. Physical science has had to deal with the machinery, the apparatus, the detailed mechanism of Nature; it has been engaged in dissecting and analysing and laying bare, so to speak, the nerves, and arteries, and muscles, and sinews of the great natural world. This is right, of course, in its proper place. There *is* a usefulness, there *is* a necessity for a dissecting-room; but a dissecting-room is not an artist's studio. With all this, Art in its truest sense has nothing to do. Before us in Nature is the permanent, the

eternal, and also the accidental and the passing; with the accidental and the passing, true Art, I submit, has nothing to do; it does not concern itself with the framework or the mere mechanism—it leaves these alone to take their proper place and do their real work; it looks through them and beyond them, and sees what they mean. By the power of genius it brings out and shows to us those glorious and eternal realities of which all that appears to the senses is only a hint and an expression. If so, then Art must be real, but never "realistic," it is not anatomy; it is not photography of the material; it is the power to express the meaning of Nature in its truest, widest sense. Art then, must imply idealism, not realism, if it is to fulfil its highest and truest function. Moral truths, spiritual truths, are the great things; the magnificent and awful pictures of natural beauty, or of human life, can never be forgetful of these: if it does, its function is gone. It is no longer a *vates*, it is no longer a prophetess, or a priestess, it is at best a dissecting student of anatomy; at worst, a photographer of merely material facts, or even of hideous evil.

III.

There can be no doubt that in modern times an increasing tendency has shown itself to treat art in

this unhappy way. Certain prominent names in French literature occur to us at once, as representatives of this tendency. There have indeed been realists *and* realists; there have been great geniuses who have been unfortunately realistic, and whose works, however truly great they are, are not free from the stain and disgrace of some of the worst things which belong to this form of degeneracy. Still, they have kept before them some sense of a high *morale;* they are not writers who have revelled in filth, and whose pages are stained continually with abominations. Things have gone on, however; contagion passes from country to country, and we know too well that amongst far too many, in England as well as in France, writers are not only tolerated, but even applauded, who are very apostles in iniquity. Against this every thoughtful man and every Christian surely should set his face like a flint: it is treason against art; it is the destruction of all noble literature; at the best it is low and vulgar; at the worst it is using one of God's "good gifts" as an engine for advancing the works of the devil. As we value the purity of our homes, as we value strength, and sweetness, and nobility of character in the boys and girls, and in the young men and young women of England, we should set our face against a debasing and corrupting method of treating the great

questions of life; we should set our face against an art, whether pictorial or literary, which tends to stain the imagination, and defile the heart, and lower all nobility of character, and turn its students into cynics, if it does not turn them into devils.

The odiousness of this kind of thing is plain enough, chiefly in the writings of authors, with the mention of whose names I will not insult your ears, but who are written about and spoken about—alas for our degeneracy!—as if they were interesting examples of a special kind of genius. If we think of it, it is not merely the treachery to Art itself and to so serious a thing as literature; the danger and evil go much farther—it indicates at bottom a denial of God, and a cynical contempt for human nature. According to the theories of these workers, human nature is of course a thing to be studied, and the way to do it is to get hold of the worst and most degraded and lowest types of it. It is held that this is to represent human nature really as it is; that the real fact is, that human nature is another expression for a specially vile though a specially gifted beast. If you are to learn about it at all, you are to study it under this belief, and therefore to exhibit the vilest specimen you can find; if others appear to be better than this, they are not really so; their "beastliness" is only covered over by a thin veneer of make-

believe. There is no really spiritual part of man; all that we call intellectual energy, as well as all sensual instinct or desire, are only different forms of expression in a merely materialistic animal. These forms of expression are (to use the jargon of the day) "modified by environment." The social conditions of life have grown out of all this, but if we want to know the real facts and understand the true spring of action, we are to get down to the animal himself. The function of Art is to photograph all this; imagination is altogether to be banished: it is mere folly to praise goodness and feel a sympathy with its struggles and its triumphs: in a Christian sense, it does not exist. It is equal folly to be horrified with wickedness; a right view of things teaches us that such feelings towards one or the other are absurd; good and evil are merely natural and material facts, and *the* thing is to find the lowest types you can, to note and put in the plainest language the most loathsome situations, to put in the mouths of your characters no ideal sentiments, but the lowest and most vulgar language that you can find; and then, having succeeded in making these filthy and degrading photographs of life, to call this a work of art, and to advise mankind to study it, so as to know "real" facts, and out of their examination to proceed to (again using the common

phrase) "solve social problems": that is, try and settle things among this race of beasts as may seem least inconvenient for your own self-interest and for your own comfort.

This is no caricature of the vaunted "realism" which is supposed to be the glory of modern Art. Brethren, we cannot away with it. It is an inspiration of the devil; it is a very abomination of desolation, standing where it ought not. For notice the utter treason of it against human nature. It is true that we belong to a fallen race; it is true that we are the victims of many self-delusions, and that we are brought too readily under the sway of sin; it is true that "the world is very evil." It is not true that we are a mere mass of corruption and a mere variety—and an especially bad variety, and unfortunate variety—of materialistic beasts. It is true that circumstances (or, as these precious teachers always like to call it, "environment") have much to do with conduct; for circumstances do assist in making more easy or less easy conduct of any given kind; but it is also true that no human creature is ever forced into evil any more than he is forced into good. In man, as in nature, there is plenty that is religious and plenty that is sacred, and the "artist" who forgets or ignores this, is not only a traitor to his own higher nature and to the race to

which he belongs, but he is practically an ignorant fool whose eyes are closed to the patent facts of human history, and who is neglecting at least two-thirds of the constituent parts of that wonderful nature which he, forsooth, undertakes to interpret.

It was a sad thing indeed when in the later days of the Roman Empire so many men who had grown "sick with a hope out of mind," and who were ignorant of the Christian revelation, had reached the point of dealing with man as if he were not a personal being. He was looked upon by many of them "either as an emanation of the world-soul, eternally transfused through material forms from generation to generation, or as a product of the earth's slime warmed into life by the sun's heat"; with them he had no real personal life. Man had lost God, and consequently he had lost himself. This was sad, but it was intelligible; men were living then for the most part before the light of divine revelation had reached them; they were standing shivering on the brink of a great catastrophe; they were watching what seemed to be coming upon them—the end of human society and the collapse of the world! How much sadder is it now, when, within hearing of the teaching of the Catholic Church, and in the midst of a civilisation which, with all its drawbacks and all its faults, is still drenched through and through with many noble

principles, men deliberately go back to what may be called a pagan reaction! No, it is an insult to paganism to call it that. Even paganism had noble ideals, and by these teachers "idealism" is denounced. No, though they might walk in sunlight, "they love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." They come forward as artists, and betray art; as interpreters of human nature, and insult humanity; as guides and prophets for the young of their generation, and those who are the rising hope of the age, and then they set out to lead them into the caverns of darkness, and to make them companions of the children of corruption and the daughters of death. Whatever you do, avoid and detest that sort of "realism," which in modern times is encouraging debased standards in some of the arts more strictly so-called, and positive vileness in literature. Doubtless at all times there has been plenty of wickedness of this sort, but at least it has skulked away and hidden itself in places fitting for it; but woe to the time and woe to the generation who permit your photographers of filth to be treated with respect and considered the teachers of men!

Another serious side to the question is this, that it is the practical denial of God. Nature in its widest sense, and the human soul and human history are themselves revelations of Him; the glorious landscapes

of a green and smiling country, the rocky ranges of awful mountains, the sweep of clouds, the voices of the winds and the solemn music of the rolling sea : these things reveal the power and the majesty of God. The intellect of man is an image of his Creator's all-embracing thought ; his conscience is a witness to the reality and value of the justice and goodness of God ; and the whole region of his affections is a whisper of God's love. It is true indeed that these have all been stained and tainted by the dreadfulness of sin. The abuse of free-will has indeed been a serious calamity, and in consequence of it there has been plenty of evil and misery in the world ; but all the same, God is there, and there are plenty of witnesses to His existence and glory. To treat Nature as a mere dead machine, to treat man as a merely material beast of whom vileness and wickedness are the chief characteristics, is not only to be false to evident and immediate facts, not only to be traitor to human nature, but also to deny God.

IV.

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights." Art is one of those "good gifts," and to be true to itself, it must be distinctly religious. Real artists

never made mere copies and photographs of the mechanism of things, much less did they choose the vilest types and the worst situations, as the means of studying humanity: they have had to treat of evil indeed, because evil is in the world, but they have put it in its proper place. They have depicted it as the foil to goodness, they have led men through the things of sense to the great unseen world, through the struggles and toils of a sinful and yet God-born humanity to realise the splendour of goodness and the final and certain victory of truth; they have shown sin to be misery; they have had to do, in fact, with a spiritual world; they have been no mere photographers; they have been idealists, *they have worked from within.*

Even the old Greeks could do this: they understood something of the splendour of great ideas in the plays of Sophocles, in the pages of Plato, in the figures of the frieze in the Parthenon, in the idealised statues in the temples. Then turn to the Middle Ages. Who teaches us of the greatness and the sorrows of humanity like Francia, like Perugino, like Angelico, like Raffaelle himself? These men worked from within; they worked from their own souls; they could put aside the merely accidental, the merely transitory, and bring out the Lasting and the Eternal. On the roofs

of Orvieto, and even—with all the more or less realistic and anatomical turn of Angelo—on the ceilings of the Sistine, if you find sometimes the gigantic, or even the grotesque, you always find genius working out from Eternity, you find the triumph of the Ideal. "Idealism" in Art is reality. "Realism" is falseness and caricature.

Ah! beware of taking any part in, or giving any encouragement to, that modern form of desecration of God's "good gifts" which is showing itself in a realistic and vulgar pictorial and scenic tendency, and in a debased and degrading literature.

v.

Take one example, however, which lies near home, and which for many reasons ought to teach us the true way in which genius ought to interpret human nature. To stand in the stately church of Stratford,* to be in sight of Shakespeare's grave, is to be reminded not only that you are near the last resting-place of one of the greatest geniuses of the world, but also to remember—as though the old Church and the quiet grave were symbols of a serious fact—that there

* Preached in the Parish Church of Stratford-on-Avon, on the occasion of the Shakespeare Centenary, April 23, 1893.

ought to be an inseparable connection between real Art and true Religion. Here we are by the grave of a genuine Englishman ; we think of one whose life was one of a homely and modest character. We know that he had his faults, and that in his youth he had not been free from sins ; we know too that he was beloved by those who knew him, that some early faults committed by him were, as far as could be, undone ; we are told that he filled the quiet places of a husband, a father, and a good citizen in his own native Stratford so as to command the respect of those who were around him. Thinking of him in one way, we are face to face with a man in many respects of typical English character. Thinking of him in another way, we are face to face, not only with a great artist and a great dramatist, but also perhaps with the very greatest and certainly with one who had the largest and deepest knowledge of human nature, and who is and always will be one of the greatest teachers of men. From every part of the thoughtful and civilised world, not only from England, but from everywhere, there comes a perpetual acclaim of admiration for his greatness and his genius. How did he use his magnificent endowments as a teacher of men through literary powers ? It is certainly true, and of necessity indeed, from the age he lived in, that there are plenty of expressions

in Shakespeare which we might describe as coarse; there is, however, nothing vile. Here you have a genial sympathy with humanity, and that deep respect for human nature, even amidst its sins and follies, which is a mark of great minds. Evil is necessarily not forgotten indeed, for the great artist is dealing with a fallen race; faults and foibles and follies are not hidden, but are treated with justice and truth. There is, however, never a touch of mere photographing of degraded vileness, but a deep and penetrating glance into the realities of a nature which, however stained with evil, is above all things spiritual still.

To read Shakespeare, or to see him represented on the stage by artists of masterly power, is to be taught to think more deeply and more seriously; is to be saddened at sin and thrilled with the beauty of greatness and goodness and self-sacrifice; is to be touched by a reality which runs in different tones all up the gamut of human nature; is to feel the awfulness of justice, the nobleness of friendship, the sweetness of love, the solemnity of death; is to rise into that higher world which is the real world of our spirits, where we are stimulated, by contemplation of the Ideal, into sympathy for humanity and worship of God. There is no absence of Religion in such Art as this: none of your

mawkish, prurient, vulgar, degrading realism, but that true idealism which is one of God's "good gifts," in which Art and Religion join hands.

Be true, I beseech you—as you think of the old Church at Stratford, amongst the fair trees and soft meadows of our own green England, as you think of Shakespeare's grave—be true to the nobler teachings of those great writers and great artists of the world, who lead you by a noble idealism to love and study, not the corrupt, but the excellent; and who have helped, under God, to build up the higher characteristics of a brave and religious people, and to encourage the virtues which have adorned and exalted our English homes.

VI.

For, indeed, we must remember that no life can be lived nobly unless it has before it a noble ideal. Nothing can be more fatal to the young, nothing more lowering to the beauty and usefulness of youthful manhood, than to lower the standard and to forget to keep before us an ideal. The greatest of great ambitions is the ambition to be better. We are each of us artists, working at our own souls; and to work well we must have an idea towards which we are aiming. This is never more

true than in the case of young men. What they want—in order firmly to put their foot on the brute within them, in order fully to develop the great things that may be drawn out of their own souls—is of course the teaching of truth and the grace of God, but it is also the keeping before them a high ideal and a noble enthusiasm.

Virtue, dear friends, means manly strength. Vice comes of weakness and sin. Where do you think, young men and young women, you will find that which ennobles and that which assists you to the height of your better selves? Certainly not in the modern development of "realistic"—that is, of debasing and corrupting forms of art, either in painting or literature, or in the ignoble types of the drama. You will be helped by a high and pure literature, and by idealism in Art, for these things are the handmaids of Religion, and it is by religion that you are strengthened to fight your battles and to grow into goodness.

There is One Ideal before us all who applies Himself to every situation, to every age, to every rank. As the Eternal Word, He is the very Fountain of genius, the Light that lighteneth every man that cometh into the world. As the pattern Man, He shows us the necessary glories of our humanity. He lived *in* time, but *for* eternity. We must

follow Him, and do the same. That is another way of saying we must remember the spirituality of our nature, and reach towards the ideal of life. He was a perfect example of truth; we must follow Him there. That is another way of saying we cannot give ourselves away to a one-sided and insulting view of our poor human nature, but take the wide and real view of its greatness and its sorrow. He was the great example of love; we must follow Him there too. That is another way of saying that passion must be purified and affection illuminated by goodness, and all that is base and degrading must be fought against with unflinching energy; for the corruption that is in the world comes through evil and unchastened desire, and to allow *that* to rule us is to numb or lose the highest of all powers that are given to us—the power to love.

We must be idealists; we must follow Jesus Christ.

Below us are depths of horror, of an Inferno created by boiling passions and devilish wickedness and rebellion against goodness and God. Better not dare to look down there, lest false lights of hell deceive us, and lure us to destruction, and we lose our souls. There are glorious heights above us; we may see the tops of everlasting mountains;

the stars are fading. Look up! we are on the track of the dawn. Be like him who

> Loved well because he hated—
> Hated wickedness which hinders loving.

Still more, be like Him who died for us; sooner than betray the cause of humanity, keep before you the Ideal. Your capacity for goodness and greatness will be measured by your power of throwing yourselves forward to the future while you are living in the present life. There is another world. There will be a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Live for that. Let righteousness be your study, and strength your duty, and love which purifies, the very atmosphere of your being. Avoid that which is evil, cleave to that which is good; and there lies before you a future of unimagined wonder and unmeasured blessedness. Beloved, let us live for the ideal; and then "it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

THE SOUL AND THE UNSEEN

"Delight thou in the Lord, and He shall give thee thy heart's desire."—Ps. ~~xxxviii. 4~~

374

THE SOUL AND THE UNSEEN

THE Psalms are always coming to our aid in the deepest things of life. We all know how they meet us as no other volume of sacred poetry can. Other great collections of sacred poems of other religions have dwelt upon certain aspects of the mysteries of life, and the solemn and serious and half-veiled truths of Nature and love of the Creator; but the Psalms go deeper. They touch the intellect, but it is through the heart. They dwell on truths of the first importance, but they approach them not so much intellectually as by the direct action of the soul.

Brethren, this makes the Psalms so dear to us all. The passionate assertion of nearness to, and dependence upon, God is everywhere here. More, the Psalms are emphatic again and again, as are many other passages of Holy Scripture, on that which I desire here and now to ask you to think of—viz., the value of close intercourse of the soul with God as the way to deeper knowledge of the Unseen.

I.

The inner life is a very real thing. Movement and growth, the play of being upon being—these are characteristic of the mystery of life. Deep within us all is, as we know well, that which thinks, and yet certainly is, not thought; which moves and uses intellect, and yet certainly is something beyond mind; which feels, and yet is not feeling; which wills, and yet, again, *is*, behind all voluntary action. This we are sure of; this we know; this is a fundamental fact which we cannot dissect or analyse, we only find there and believe;—there is the self, the soul.

The soul or self has indeed intellectual capacity and the outfit of desire; but the self, the inner self, apart from the equipments and endowments of the creature, has a place in and may rest upon, and grow in knowledge of, the Unseen by a direct intercourse with God. No one of course doubts the vast importance of the exercise of direct intellectual capacity on facts and phenomena. No one doubts the vast importance of careful instruction in any science which man desires to master, and therefore in the science of Religion; but a Christian and a Catholic cannot doubt that grace is an awful and prevailing force which can play on the soul – apart from know-

ledge. If it were not so, regeneration in Holy Baptism could not be, and, far from God accepting His creature and being the Author of free grace, the creature would be the one to accept God, and grace would not be free. This thought may illustrate what we are thinking of—viz., that once the soul is so far instructed and enlightened as to know of God, and of its duties to Him, and of the methods placed before it by the Faith—there are important means, indeed *the* important means, of leading on to and realising the Unseen in the soul's direct contact with God.

This may be called mysterious, but, dear friends, it matters very little what it is called, so long as it is true. Mysterious teachings, let us remember in passing, like other serious and true systems of thought, doubtless have been guilty of extravagance and at times have run wild. Mystery represents a truth notwithstanding, and a truth very far from being devoid of value, we may well believe, in times like our own. For when the outward is strong and close and pressing, when even the duties towards what is outward make claims upon us not to be neglected and of a serious kind, when the wave of impulse in our time of trial is overwhelmingly "social," and all that concerns the well-being of all of us in the world is well to the front ;—

where this is so, we can't be far wrong in thinking once and again how far faithfulness to the inner life, and energy in spiritual effort may lead us on the path of knowledge and strength in relation to eternal things, and therefore on the path of duty.

That the outer world *is* strong we can have no sort of doubt. It is not merely that things of sense assert themselves against the things of the spirit—that of course; but knowledge is so widespread: time is so filled up with matters which demand immediate attention; freedom of opinion and the expression of opinion are so complete; it is so difficult for minds to thread their way through the tangle of jostling beliefs, that the general temper of the times has more than ever a subtle influence upon the thoughts of each, and that temper is almost necessarily averse to the Unseen.

Is there not a danger here? Is it not all the more necessary, not the less, that because "social problems" are engrossing so exclusively the attention of the time, because hasty change in all institutions seems to be the order of the day, each single soul should be more, not less, loyal to the meaning and methods of the inner life? We ought indeed to cultivate the ambition to be better. We ought to share the enthusiasm which happily is abroad for the helping of our fellows and the advancing the

best interests of mankind. But not what we *do* or what we *say* will be of permanent and effective value, but what we *are*. After all, it is by personal contact, in the long run, by the touch of heart with heart and life with life, that things are improved and men and women are made better ; after all, our Lord's method is the best method : not movements, but men, not machinery, but human lives, must effect changes for good. For the sake of our race and our time, then, the care of the soul is of importance ; but more, if in a time like this there is —as who can doubt ?— a danger of *outwardness*, all the more is the duty of being faithful to the inner life.

But further, brethren, there is just now a striking desire for knowledge of the Unseen. Surely, whatever clouds of doubt have gathered over the old faith in our time, there is a yearning for some foothold for some security. Well, then, it is worth while to recall the true path of knowledge. A heart fixed on God learns to know God. A soul giving its best affection to Him who made it, and keeping close to Him, learns the mysteries of the other world. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He shall show them His covenant." "Delight thou in the Lord—and He shall give thee thy heart's desire." By faithfulness in the inner life, the soul is brought face to face with a knowledge of the Unseen.

II.

To be faithful, dear friends, to the laws of the inner life is, then, especially necessary now. For better, for worse, we live in a time when there is a positive passion for indefiniteness. It is so in ecclesiastical matters; it is so in religion. We know how men love to hover between a "yes" and a "no." You have your ecclesiastical agnostics, and you have your religious agnostics. There is, indeed, a good side to this—sad as it is in many ways. Scientific teachers and atheistic propagandists are less fanatical, less dogmatic, less doctrinaire, than at times they have shown themselves to be. There is more sense of mystery "in the air." Men are beginning to feel that there is more to be said for the supernatural than they imagined not so long ago; the off-hand and jaunty condemnation of belief in an unseen world is less common. If men will not assert, they will not so wildly deny; if they fear to commit themselves to a definite creed, they hesitate to take the responsibility of a flat refusal. It is not a noble cast of thought. Much of it may, alas! arise from sheer intellectual laziness; much of it, unhappily, rises like a stupefying vapour out of the grave of moral earnestness, and is only a product of spiritual death. That is true; but still, there is more of a twilight than there

was, and less of density of darkness. There is some hint and promise of the breaking of the day.

The age, too, considers itself critical. At much of the so-called "criticism" it is difficult to repress a smile. Still, "criticism" of some sort is abroad. Every one is passing judgment on every thing—whether or not their knowledge of the question entitles them so to do. Criticism of all sorts—bad, good, indifferent—has not been chary of its judgments and decisions on religious questions; and yet, when all is over, Christ and Christianity remain. Even your Renans and Strausses go their way, with their heavy ecclesiastical arguments, or their picturesque and light and fanciful romancing. They amuse, or interest, or startle, or shock; but soon they have faded into the distance, and Christ is still before the age. Even your apostles of "the Revolution" stand and belaud the obscene and unhappy miscreants of the more blasphemous period of the great upheaval in European belief. They fascinate, or shake, or horrify their readers; but their paradoxes rise and die, and Christ stands on. In no age more than in our own has the demon of unbelief and denial been more actively at work. Men have suffered; men have been shaken; souls have been injured; havoc has been done. True; but in no age have men, in

spite of all, been more alive to the fact that the last word for man's life is not with unbelieving criticism; that there certainly is something beyond. "Out of darkness He bringeth light." Ah, brethren! the very unbelief, the very insolence of criticism, which has pained believing Christians, and filled them with sorrow and anxiety for souls—this in its way has been startling men into realising more fully the reality of the Unseen; the mystery of another world, very near yet closely veiled; the certainty that to have the heart's desire of knowledge and righteousness, there is need of something more than sceptical criticism; there is need to come heart to heart with God in the inner life; there is need to "delight in the Lord."

III.

The sailor may be seated in his cabin, and seeing nothing beyond but the distant glimmer of the stars through the port-hole, while feeling the motion of the surrounding sea; or out on the deck, where the waves are raving and the ship is running before the gale. In the blackness of the night he may feel the circumscribed possibilities of his frail and tiny house, and see nothing of the vast expanse of Deep or the distant though cloud-covered heavens, or the splendour of the veiled yet shining stars. Still, the

movement of the ocean and the sound of the fickle winds speak of unmeasured immensity, and he knows and feels that beyond the ship's rail there is the great mysterious Sea; beyond the impenetrable mass of enveloping vacancy, somewhere there is the shining of the stars. The soul is imprisoned in the frail bark of its mortal dwelling-place, and besides, all round it often is the war of the tempest and the gloom of the clouds. But there are sounds from the Unseen which speak of eternity: these "fallings from us, vanishings, blank misgivings of a creature moving about in worlds not realised." There are whispers in the conscience, and the risings of ideals of a better life; there is need to *know* more in spiritual things, a sense of the emptiness of all that does not last, a longing for closer contact with the highest and best, a yearning to be better, a yearning to love with more complete self-forgetting. There is, in fact, beyond the present moment, a truer, deeper longing of the whole being. There is another world. There is the gift of "beautiful things made new for the delight of the sky-children." Ah! where shall we find it? How shall we reach it? Science can do nothing for us: it has noble work of its own, but only bounded by a world of sense and sight. Criticism can do nothing for us: it is at best on the surface of things, at worst a teacher

of unsatisfying negations. O Soul! thou needest to come close to the Eternal. "Delight thou," O Soul! "delight thou in the Lord, and He shall give thee thy heart's desire."

Materialism has failed. Science here is silent. Mere pleasure-seeking gives nothing but unsatisfied despondency at last. In all these there is only work upon the machinery of our being, or the mere teaching, not how to know, but how to ignore or forget. We want the Lasting, we want the Real. Something is needed *to fall back upon* when all this pain and unreality have vanished away. We want God. The soul is in need of the movement, and growth, and energetic effort, and trial, and discipline, and reward of that which is its truest, its most lasting condition—*the inner life*. Brethren, in ourselves, in our better selves, we have the witness to this. Who does not know the solemn calls that come evidently from beyond this scene of sense? Who does not know the remonstrances of conscience? Who has not had moments of illumination and whispers of higher things? Sometimes amidst the common labours of the common day; sometimes in the dead of night, when all the house is still; sometimes in listening to the sighing of the mournful winds, or the thunderous music of the far-resounding sea; sometimes in the noisy street; sometimes under

leafy trees in the hot afternoon, or under the open sky in the hours of the closing day; sometimes at the sickbed of the dying; sometimes in the intimate converse of dear and sympathetic friends; sometimes from a verse in Scripture; sometimes from a suggested thought in a passing phrase of romance: in a thousand ways, in many different places, the voice of witness strikes deep into our being and finds an echo; the hand of witness sweeps the chords of our being, and they vibrate to its touch. Only let us be in any measure true to our very selves in the innermost recesses of the soul, and we know that there *is* One with whom we may hold intercourse; there are powers which we may bring to play upon our being so that it becomes stronger and clearer in fibre and sight; there is for each one of us the possibility of diligent exercise in the inner life.

That there are difficulties in the way, who will deny? Difficulties are many and various, and the *first* great question for the soul is how it deals with these. Intellectual difficulties in multitude present themselves. Problems there are ready for solution, unquestionably, right and left: why evil should exist at all in the world of a good God; why so much misery; why such inequality of position and opportunity; why some are so unaccountably handicapped

in the race of life; why we do not know, and know without possibility of doubt, *all* about all that concerns us so deeply as the true rule of life, or the facts which lie beyond the grave; and so on. These have their places; these deserve appropriate treatment; but fond as men have appeared to be of dwelling upon the existence of such difficulties, believe me, in the long run it is not these which affect men. We may be tempted to make much of these, but in very deed it is not these which stagger us; it is not these which, for the most part, cloud the inner life.

Then there are difficulties of opportunity. Some—in a world which seems to lay its plans to keep men entirely devoted to what meets the eye—are terribly hindered by the mere arrangements of social life from using the means provided for feeding their souls. There are difficulties of weak health, or overmastering care, or failing energy, or, still more, of old habits of sin or of longings in the soul to help others, when others refuse help; or of anxieties of sympathy when souls harden themselves against all approaches of sympathetic hearts. It is a strange contrary world, and the employment of half the men and women seems to be to torment the other half—these are difficulties. Well, what are difficulties for? Whether they are due to faults of our own in the

past, for which we are now heart-sorry, or to things and conditions which we cannot control, cannot command, they are allowed; they are valuable for our purpose—they are ours to conquer. Difficulties are given to be got over.

Ah, brethren, in spite of all, we may, if we will, know God more intimately and trust Him more entirely. We may, if we will, give difficulties the "go-by."

IV.

For surely what we have to cultivate here are certain spiritual habits, as to which we have to be in earnest and attentive. It is one thing to be foolishly introspective, to be unceasingly dissecting our spiritual states and experiences, and the conditions and assertions of conscience; it is quite another to be wary and watchful over our inner life. Brethren, let me remind you, then, of certain habits to cultivate which is to be wise and loyal to advance in spiritual things.

(1) We do well to avoid the habit of making excuses. We know well that the first impulse of our self-love is to excuse ourselves to ourselves, to others, and even to God. Human capacity for self-deceit is almost boundless; against nothing have we to be more on our guard than against

that. But if that is to be guarded against, we shall have to resist, and resist with earnestness the habit of making excuses. Once see the heinousness of sin, once earnestly train the heart to the love of God, once look on the science of goodness as the science of life, we may hope, in God's mercy, to palliate our offences, and in Christ's merits to save us when we have gone wrong. But excuses for ourselves we will not make; we shall fear evasions and double-dealings with conscience, and in spiritual matters try above all things with ourselves to be true.

(2) On the other hand, we must learn to be patient with ourselves. Impatience in spiritual things often comes of pride. If the inner life be real life, there will be growth; but growth is usually slow, and in the soul of a fallen creature there are many weaknesses which hinder and faults which check. We cannot expect all at once to have the triumph of the saints or the perfection of the blessed. Slowly character is formed, and if God is so patient with us, we have to learn, dear friends, to be very patient with ourselves. The experiences of our own lives teach us humility. We learn our own weaknesses and our many mistakes; and the more honestly we desire to know the truth, and the more firmly we refuse to make

excuses, the more we are taught the necessity of allowing—in things of the soul as in other things—that "patience" should "have her perfect work."

(3) Again, what we have to fear, and that against which we have to strive, is slackness of will. Many a soul can see the truth, and is in no sort of darkness as to duty, who fails to grip the one or do the other. The reason is—slackness of will. He must not only *wish*, he must *will* to be better. He must will with such determination and steady resolve as is shown by the ambitious politician or the ardent and pushing commercial man. If religion be a reality to us—not a dream, not a possibility, not an affair of external exercise in works or practice, however benevolent or however good—if it be *the* thing in life, the realisation of the tie which binds the soul to its Creator, the reasonable being to the Source of its life; if it hold, as it should hold, the first place; if to know God and to enter into His thoughts and purposes for us be our supreme desire; then we shall *will* with a will to do right, and earnestly to seek Him. We shall not allow ourselves to imagine that our passing fancies or our best conclusions are all the same as His purpose and His truth. We shall have "cager and reverent thoughts" of Him, and the duty of being

strong will grow upon us. In spiritual things, in fact, we have to be up and doing. This is no languid exercise of passing wishes, but a real and energetic exercise of will.

(4) And if this is so, can we guard ourselves too earnestly against the fatal habit of turning God out of a part of our lives? "In Him"—in a very deep sense in our spiritual determination and exercises and energies, as much as in the inevitable necessities of our existence—"we live and move and have our being." Nothing can be more fatal to any real inner life than the habit (surely we have all been tempted to it) of what I may call keeping God for special occasions. We live in a world of compromise. There are occasions in life when, in order to "live and let live," compromise is not only justifiable, it is right. Compromise of truth and principle, however, must be always wrong. To this how sorely we are drawn we all must know. In theology we have it before our eyes day by day. There are plenty of men who will have no quarrel with the statements of theology, or the assertions of religious duties, so long as these are confined within the covers of the Prayer-Book. Bring them into light, treat them as facts, put them into practice, and you are treated as a pariah by such persons. They seem to have entered into

a tacit understanding that statements of the most solemn character are to be made so long as they are treated as statements, and no more.

In religion, alas! it is the same. The human soul cannot bear entirely and determinedly to give up God; also it shrinks from falling in with what seem to be His exacting demands. "Religion in its proper place," that is the cry. "Do not obtrude it where it ought not to be." God will do for hours of sorrow; He will do for the proprieties of religion; He is not out of place in times of contemplation or more serious thought; but you are not to go too far in homage to Him. The "world" and its principles must be attended to: they are to have their place. You must allow yourself to be worldly and self-seeking, and stingy and luxurious, at the proper time; and God must have His hours of devotion and respect.

Brethren, this will not do. We must at least try not to play fast and loose with God. It is indeed difficult, I grant, in a complicated state of civilisation; it is not easy, if living in a society which does not entirely deny religion, and yet is leavened with worldly principles—it is not easy always to see your way. Still, if our inner life is to be healthy and real—if we are to hope to grow and advance in the knowledge and love of the Unseen, so needful for the soul—we must try and watch and pray, so

that we may never be content to be in anything without God.

(5) And then, again, as to all difficulties of whatever kind, whether they be intellectual (and these, remember, are very seldom the real difficulties in spiritual things), or whether they be moral, or personal, or social—arising, that is, from temptations in our moral nature, or from our special build of character, or from the peculiar condition and circumstances of our lives—we must settle it in our minds that these form a part of our discipline; that without these, it is seen by One who knows us and loves us, we cannot be properly trained. God is educating us day by day. If, indeed, we are to have the glorious and solemn lessons He has to teach, we must be prepared for sharp trials, and ready to do justice to the methods of His training. We must face difficulties yes, and use them, as a part of the store of blessings which our Father has laid up for our use.

How constantly we are inclined to say, how often we almost persuade ourselves to believe, that if we were in such and such circumstances, other than those in which we are, things would be very different, and our advance would be more certain and quick. No, not so! We only deceive ourselves by such fancies. Our form of probation is our own, and we

can need no other. To be taught and tried is what we are here for in preparation for the great "Beyond," and He who knows us, and "loves us better than he knows," gives us that form of schooling, and that kind of discipline on which our souls may be most perfectly formed. The great point is to embrace and use it. "Ever the worst turns the best to the brave." To seize a cross firmly is to deprive it of half its pain. To accept the difficulties of life with a brave and willing mind is to use them as they are intended to be used—as the discipline, the healthy and helpful discipline—of the inner life.

(6) But above all, for advance in the inner life, there is need in some measure of that initial purpose which should guide our way. We must *mean* Religion. We must look more and more upon it as something entirely definite and exacting, as a real business of life. We have to learn to put before us a real object towards which we are to tend, and to learn, in our measure, devotion to that object. Around this must rise our ambitions and enthusiasms, to give force to these, our passions and affections must be used. We have to get rid—in the interior recesses of our souls—of what is vague and indeterminate, and adopt what is definite and clear. The "world" plays with religion. Be indefinite, and you will do for *it;* be definite, and you are by *it*

condemned. In the inner life of the Christian it is quite the reverse. Be definite there, and there will be growth and progress ; be indefinite, and you are lost. There must be a deepening sense of responsibility, there must be a willing acceptance of labour and sorrow, there must be an increasing effort to conquer self-seeking and to devote oneself.

We may have, dear friends—we must have—the common aims of men before us, each in his own way, but none the less they must be secondary. One aim must more and more be sovereign—the aim to please God. We have each of us work to do in the world, but if the inner life is real, it has to be done in a spirit and temper which belong to eternity, and the fear and love of "Him who is invisible" are to be carried unflinchingly into the little matters of every day. We may not indeed be able—like the greatest of God's messengers—be able to be wholly separate from all common pursuits of men. But if we cannot rightly share the exalted *degree* of their devotion, we can and we must share its *kind*. For if the soul is to be truly alive to the Unseen, then our effort, like theirs, must be to be completely in accord with the purpose and will of Him to whom we look and on whom we depend. We may, yes we must, *love God*. Ah ! brethren to watch and pray for the pure purpose, the single eye, the interior self-surrender of

a real devotion, even amid the humbler concerns, this is to have that "peace in believing," that hope and trust and joy which mark at all times, in their various degrees, the servants of God ; this is to make a reality of the inner life. Ah, brethren, in a world of passing shadows, choose, choose that which is lasting—in all things, above all things, try to *serve God.*

v.

When we think of these things we Christians are brought back to the meaning of those *holy practices* which are meant to support the inner life. To train our very beings, our real selves, in relation to that great unseen world to which we belong, is the object of life. We can never fulfil those social duties which Christianity lays upon us unless our own souls be right with God. When we preach social duty we are right, but if with that we begin, we begin at the wrong end. God and the soul first ! The soul and the Unseen ! Then, then only, are we fitted for the true fulfilment of social claims, with the balance of mind and truth of spirit becoming to Christians.

The Catholic Faith is eminently practical. Touching "the things which are seen" with one hand, it touches with the other "the things that are not

seen." Sacraments carry in them simplicity, and with outward signs from a world of sense—yet awful in their depth, their meaning, their power—are provided for every state and condition of life. Let us reverence them, let us use them with a religious and devoted mind. Then there is the practice of meditation and the exercise of prayer. To meditate on the Unseen is for the soul to realise the real objects of interest and importance with which we have to do. No longer are we in a world of notions: we are in a world of facts. Do you wonder at the incredulous smile of the unbeliever when he hears the Catholic speak of the solemn facts of an unseen world with an accent of certainty? The one has heard of them, and they do not suit him, and he finds in them a dull romance; the other has been among them, is intimate with them. They are *the* solemn certainties of his life. Use meditation, dear friends, on the revelations of the Faith and the words of Christ, to give depth and meaning to the inner life.

And need I say that if the Unseen is to be ours in its due proportion, we must be ever advancing in the practice of prayer. As reasonable beings, not only to feel our dependence on God, and to realise His greatness and beauty and wisdom and love, but to go consciously and constantly into His presence,

"carrying all our care," and bringing to Him the sacrifice of our thanksgiving and praise—this is *the* essential effort of duty by which we deepen the inner life. To pray is to live. To live in the spirit of prayer is to be at home with the Unseen. Whatever you do, O soul, born for eternity, be faithful to prayer.

Ah! as we feel the chances and changes of this mortal life; ah! as time moves on, ever increasing in value as the moments fly; ah! as sin becomes to us more repellent and "more exceeding sinful"; ah! as the Saviour becomes increasingly our hope and joy, we learn that the inner life is the real life, and to it we must be loyal, come what may.

Brethren, there is another world. Strains of its music reach us in hours of sorrow; voices from its blessed ones cheer us in loneliness and pain; God, above all the great, the blessed, is the central joy, with whom we may have happy and unflagging intercourse—if we will.

"This is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou has sent."

"Delight thou, O soul, delight thou in the Lord, and He shall give thee thy heart's desire."

THE SOUL AND ITS PERPLEXITIES

"Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?"
GEN. xviii. 25.

THE SOUL AND ITS PERPLEXITIES

HERE is the Patriarch's humble but trustful appeal to the righteousness of God. Around him and before him are mysteries of iniquity and spectacles of sorrow. He cannot see his way through them. He is certain of the righteousness of the demands of justice, certain also of the real moral excellence of mercy. He enters upon the lofty exercise of intercession, but with a humble and trustful view. Things are dark, there are many clouds. It is not easy to see the way; it is not possible to be sure of balancing all things rightly and fairly. He cannot deny the awful evil which cries to heaven for punishment, he cannot close his eyes to the appeal from lives not stained with that iniquity. How is the thing to be adjusted? A world so confused, who is to see the way through it? He does not deny the difficulty—he faces it fearlessly; but, anyhow, he does so in a temper of submission, with a sense of his own ignorance, under the influ-

ence of a sincere humility befitting the creature, and with a confident trust—when all is said and done—in the unfailing righteousness of God. "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?"

I.

Here, then, dear friends, we have suggested to us the question: What, face to face with real perplexities, is the right attitude of the soul? Here also the Christian believer finds himself at variance in a fundamental matter with those who doubt or deny God. That difficulties and perplexities surround us we cannot deny. We can deny that it is chiefly in intellectual matters that the difficulties for us lie, and that they can be solved merely by an intellectual method. To find the answer to that one question, is the real and practical duty which lies before each of us when we waken up to the grave perplexities of this most confusing world. The answer is not easy, and when answers are demanded, many and various are those that are given. Some men give the thing up. The present world is here. The most is to be made of it that is in our power. Why not take life as a short opportunity for enjoying all sensations which suit us best—as a time for pleasure if pleasure can be had,

as a time for endurance if there is no help for it, and things must be endured? It is not a noble ideal. It is not a theory of life that goes deep into the mystery of things. Alas! it is the theory too often practically adopted—to the weakening and destruction of character—by a considerable number of men.

Still, there are many who are angry at the troubles and sorrows of life, because life is so full of mystery, because things cannot be promptly unriddled and all explained. Well, dear friends, as far as the fact of mystery goes, it is scarcely reasonable to reject the religious explanation of the great problem on the ground that it involves the acceptance of mystery. What, I ask, in this world, above or below—material, metaphysical, moral, spiritual—does not involve that? A mystery is a truth, in part revealed, in part concealed; a truth, like Salvator's "Hope"—the dark-veiled. In spite of all real and interesting discoveries of science, how much behind in the material world remains a mystery? In spite of all metaphysical discoveries and analysis, is there in this department of thought no land of cloud? In spite of all teachings of moral philosophy, how much remains behind to learn! The wide familiar world around us, the growing grass and springing corn, the budding trees and opening flowers, the birth, the death, the growth, the character of our own children—remain a mystery.

The drawing of heart to heart, the beauty and sweetness of real love, the failure of high promise, the unexpected victory and achievement of forces which seemed feebleness itself—have these no mysteries about them? Nay, our very selves, the swell and ebb of feelings, of views of things, of sweet affections, or strong enthusiasms—the power of standing outside self, and viewing self—is there in this no mystery? At least we may say that mystery is not confined to the religious explanation of the world. Given a religion all—so to speak—plain sailing, a religion which leaves no realm in partial shadow, one thing we can affirm—it is not a religion for such as we are.

Indeed, what we may hope for in this region, for we find it so in others in this strange life, is not that mystery should disappear, but that certain lines of truth should emerge to guide us; so that—though the further we go, the deeper and more abundant are the worlds of mystery around us—still we may have guidance for the practical acts of life, and may be placed upon a path where mysteries show themselves as reasonable, and where we may be sure that we are on a track leading to a summit commanding all the view before and behind us, where mysteries are cleared of darkness, and where there will be a passing of shadows, and a fuller breaking of the dawn. That is the Christian's reasonable hope.

II.

Yes, but why is God not at one with His creatures? Given, that there are patches of darkness, given, that we do walk in a region of shadows, why—oh, why—is He not at least so evidently seen, so clearly reflected in the world around us that we cannot mistake, but know that He is there? Can we not? we answer. Is there not abundant evidence to those who care to read it? What! Does not Nature herself show splendid order and abundant power? What! Is there not in all the pageantry of a glorious if an awful world, plain teaching to the open intelligence, and anyhow to the open heart of "His eternal power and godhead"? True, but step into *our* world. Here is activity and effort; here are well-laid schemes, and rich invention, and fruitful labour, and social advance, and civilisation in progress, and ever new efforts and new successes, and each age a surprise on all that has happened in the last? Certainly, and yet when all is said, what does it all amount to? "Labour and sorrow."

Look round upon the material world. Here is law and order, if you please. The stately march of planets, the flowing seas, the circling winds, and regulated rule of law. Look round upon the world of sentient and irrational life, and here are in-

stincts working to their end, fulfilling their purpose, completing the intention of their Maker. Here is no mistake, no disturbance, no necessary confusion, no collapse. Here by necessity law is obeyed, here by force obedience is assured. Here is no choice but submission, no example but steady regulated fulfilment of an end and obedience to a law. But come to rational creatures, come to the human race: what then? God seems not at one with His creatures—very much the reverse. We are in the realm of freedom. That mighty word, which finds an echo of satisfaction in all our hearts, here seems a curse. It is true. The rational creature is "taken into the secret" of his being and his possibilities, and then—why, this pitiable, this heart-breaking confusion? He who seems the very crown of creation is free to disobey the law of his being – *and he does!* He does not once or twice, not occasionally or in isolated instances; but disobedience and disorder seem to amount to the regularity of a law.

What happens? Ah! dear friends, we know; we cannot deny it, whatever be the consequence; we cannot shirk the evident truth. This is no theory; this is fact. Make of it what we may, there it is, and there it stares us in the face. Evil of all sorts is around us, within us; we see it in its

awful sovereignty, we breathe its very atmosphere ; it almost seems our life-breath ; it is a condition of our being. All sorts of things in life, good and excellent, turn upon and take their colour from its existence. Evil, we are driven to admit, is everywhere ; its sway is almost regal. God—if there be a God—God, since there is a God, must hate it, cannot be at one with it : and—we must make the admission, we cannot help ourselves—God does permit it !

III.

The question, " Why ? " will rise to our lips. Some time or other we waken up to the startling fact. At first we are so used to it, it goes without saying. At first we are on such unhappily familiar terms with it, we accept it, we take it for granted ; we act on the assumption of its existence, and almost of its rightful, at least of its necessary, sway. But a moment of awaking comes. We are startled and awake as a dreamer suddenly disturbed, and then in his waking moments scared. We look round wild-eyed on the world—our once familiar world. We hear that God called it " very good : " we find it very evil. The question then comes to us, to mind and heart, to intellect and lips—" Why ? " And for us the question is accentuated by many : in scorn, or

irony, or anger, or despair, they re-echo, "Yes, why? Is He not Good, or is He not Almighty?" Our hearts sicken at the blasphemy. Something within us still, even if we cannot intellectually defend that something, refuses such solution as absolute and blasphemous folly. Never will we, never can we, descend to such a depth of cowardly despair; never can we play the traitor to our better selves in that way. Too high are we, too conscious of noble aims still possible, and hopes of still boundless power, to act in treason to such mysterious certainties of our being—for to deny *His* Almightiness and All-goodness would be such treason. We are saddened, we are perplexed, we are staggered. It is true. There is this awful shadow across the world. It is true He does permit it. And as the "Why" is reiterated in varying accents, at first we can only fearfully but firmly say, "The answer is veiled." But we are certain there *is* an answer. "In mari via tua, et semita tua in aquis multis et vestigia tua non cognoscentur" ("Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known"). "Verily, Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O thou Holy One of Israel." The answer is in shadow: the clouds are round it. But shadows may disperse, and clouds are driven before the blast and melt before the sun: the winds will rise, we are certain;

the sun will conquer yet. Bad logic, we are sure it is, that *because* things are not clear, *therefore* we should rebel. "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?"

IV.

But we will not blink the fact. Evil has a frightful, an almost universal sway.

Think of the mystery of pain! Here is the deepest, the most inexplicable thing in life. Nature, which looks so sweet a friend, has to be battled with. It needs not the genius of Victor Hugo to make us feel the stress and strain of the long, hard, never-ending struggle—how to generation after generation of the sons of toil there is the labour, the weariness, the sorrow, the exhaustion of the never-ending struggle. The so-called "triumphs" of scientific discovery mean only fresh forms of toil; and often the highest achievements come at the cost of the anguish of many, and *their* apparent defeat. The advancing car of progressive invention must still have its thousands to crush in its onward course. Pain, too! there it is from the mere necessities of the body, which is at once our trial and our home! Think of the myriad forms of illness and disease! The imagination dare not rest on the vast mass of suffering implied by the mere existence of the

merciful and helpful hospitals of Christendom. The very conditions laid down for our existence imply suffering. Our bodies are ready-made instruments to torture us. Our births, our diseases, our accidents, our deaths, mean—pain! Think of the half-starving multitudes, of those exposed to danger and hopeless toil, of lives of dreary misery, of crowded garrets, and the "sweating system" of the universe! Think of unmerited suffering! Of the cries and agonies of the little children; of inherited disease, and weakness, and bodily anguish, handed on from father to child; of homes of unmitigated and unmerited torture; of the last—often fierce and hardly bearable—agony of death!

Or turn to the moral mischief of the world. Think of the apparent unfairness in the lots of men! In one case the unfair prosperity, the easy-going ways, and overflowing comforts; in the other the equally undeserved penury and cramped lives and insufficient means. And then the triumph of injustice, the prosperous lying, the defeated truth. Think of the pain that cannot be assuaged, the misery that cannot be undone! Think of the ruined lives, and broken hearts, and sweet affections nipped like flowers by early and relentless frost! Think of the hopes that end in disappointment, and the loves that never find an earthly close! We hardly dare to

think. One long, sad wail appears to rise around us as we think, until our ears are deafened with the sound of a tempest which raves and shrieks with cries of human woe!

And God permits it! Yes, the cynic, the unbeliever, the atheist, the heart-broken reiterate the fact in varying accents. We can't deny it; and in varying accents they press the question, "Why?"

V.

Boldly, my brethren, we pause to make one provisional answer—*We do not know.* We cannot say the reason. Boldly we grant it, and yet we dare to add with an unfaltering faith—the Judge of all the earth shall do right. Granted all so far; still all is not yet said!

There are answers given which to some seem satisfying. Certainly they are not Christian. The sunny optimist deals with the facts of life in his fashion. There are some whom he seems to satisfy. Can his be called an answer? Surely not. He is the man who closes his eyes to facts. He is the ostrich who hides his head in the sand. He is the cheery person, the man who hopes and believes just what he likes, without a fulcrum for his hope or a basis for his believing. If a subject is disagreeable

he passes it by. He has no patience with people who *will* disturb his comfort, and dwell on the sorrows and disasters of multitudes, so calculated to disturb the even tenor of the way of comfortable, well-bred people. Everything with him is satisfactory ; it is proper, it is all as it should be. He closes his eyes to truth. He will not do *the* thing that all wise men do—he will not face facts. Ah ! brethren, he gives no solution of the problem. He does not answer : he evades. Absurd to waste your time upon him. One day he will have a rude awakening, since, like the rest of us, he must be subject to sorrow, to bereavement, to trouble ; since like the rest of us certainly he must die.

And then there is the dark-souled man—the pessimist. He has spoken in poetry. He has aired his theories in philosophy. Everything for him is darkness. His answer to the "Why ?" is, "there *is* no answer." All is bad, corrupt, and wretched. The world is one vast dreary, hopeless prison-house. There is no real alleviation. The worst has to be borne as best we may, but the last word of this philosophy is that we are in the worst and saddest of all possible worlds.

This, anyhow, is no real answer at all. One poet may have sung in morbid music ; another—a philosopher -may have formulated it for the use of the

schools, but there is no help in it, no light from it. And the strong sense of mankind revolts against it, and insists that it is one-sided and wrong. So also, brethren, does the Church of Christ insist. Whatever is right, this answer—if answer it be called—is clearly wrong. Its falseness may be shown if only by its consequences. Let it prevail, and it makes things unworkable. Let it prevail, and men learn to *hate* life; and what does that mean? Why, it means heartlessness, and selfishness, and cowardice—that worst and deadliest form of cowardice, the cowardice of despair.

It must be wrong, for it robs life and character of all nobility. The splendid self-denying purposes, the heroic efforts for the help of others, the gentle, kindly, hidden labours- all are gone. Nothing is left but a human brute with untamed passions, and the plaything of a hopeless destiny. What then? Why, necessarily the loosening of all moral bonds, impatient pettishness and childish complainings; then loss of all sense of duty, and then loathsome immorality and selfish surrender to all that corrupts and degrades.

No; this is no answer to that persistent "Why?" But how shall we meet so cruel and sometimes so seductive a philosophy? It has a style of its own. Like unbelief and half-belief, and easy-going theories

of religion, and popular denials of truths to belief in which you are bound by the teaching of the Church—like these it has on its side strong reinforcements. It has the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. It falls in with our laziness and selfishness. It falls in with the baser sort of temptations. It is responsible for much of the more degraded and squalid class of our sensational literature, and for many of those sensational and miserable suicides recorded from time to time in the press. It is a loathsome, an evidently false philosophy; and yet, appealing as it does to the lowest side of human nature, it needs an answer.

We may, indeed, point to the starry heavens, and remind men under the spell of this philosophy that *there* is exquisite *cosmos*, beautiful order. We may go to the vast discoveries of the telescope, or the infinitely tiny marvels made plain by the microscope, and remind men that, in spite of seeming confusion, order is evidently the characteristic mark of the Creator's treatment of His own universe, and that everywhere is the reign of law. They answer in scorn—Where's the use of order in a material world, if in the world of their experience disorder prevails? The answer is unfair; it is an exhibition of "shortened thought"; but, with men in this mood, you are dealing with those who are the victims of temper, and they see everything God does through

the angry mists of their own hectoring impatience. They remind us that our very gifts are turned against ourselves; that history, of which we make so much, is a long record of the triumphs of evil; that romance literature —so evident a feature in the literary character of our time—takes for granted and lives upon the awful fact of widespread and victorious sin. It is no use, they say, talking of a reign of law in a material universe where human nature has to grope its way through moral and spiritual confusion. At best they grant that courage to endure a hopeless lot is the only virtue for man, and that he can hardly be blamed for vices in a world in which only the selfish are happy!

Yes, brethren, this tissue of confused and interwoven falsehood and truth needs an answer. It affects our time. It undermines the faith of some, and hinders the approach to faith of others. It brings moral laxity, and lowers the tone of what might be noble lives. It darkens the firmament with its murky clouds, and shuts away from men's gaze the heaven which lies above them in glory, if only they could see.

We can answer, indeed, offhand and truly, that anyhow, granted, as we have granted, that there is much of truth in the indictment that, still, it is one-sided, it is *not* true that there is no goodness and no joy in this world, sad as it is. There are happy hearts:

there are noble lives: there are splendid achievements: there is such a thing as courage and faithfulness to duty, and truth and purity and unselfish love. Human nature is not all grim: there is a humorous side. There are legitimate enjoyments, and times of happiness, and laughter that is not folly, and pure fun which has no sin, and love devoted, deep, and exalting, and smiles of sweetness, even if sometimes mingled with tears. Clouds break after the rain. Above the darkness is the clear and glowing heaven. Even death and sorrow are transfigured by holy hope, and lose their aspects of darkness, and glow with the gold and sapphire of the dawn.

VI.

Brethren, these answers, I submit, are reasonable so far as they go. At least they lessen the force of the attack on man's hopes which comes from human perplexity, leading often to human impatience and human unbelief. But we can go further than these in confronting and answering that grim "Why?"

Well, Christians grant "the world is very evil." Christians, however, declare that, all the same, it is God's world. Evil, we grant, God permits. And men ask in perplexity or in scorn, "Why, then, does He permit? Why does He not prevent?"

According to the teaching of the Catholic Church, dear friends, this terrible "Why?" even when the answer is not clear and definite in all particulars, by no means settles the question against religion.

Many voices speak for God. Hear some.

(1) We may listen patiently to human reason. It at least reminds us that it is folly to think of a world that made itself: that there must be a God. It reminds us, further, that our very instincts as to the beauty of goodness and the malignity of evil teach us that He *must* be good. The judge of all the earth shall do right, and so that—whatever be the mystery and perplexity—sooner or later, though we may have to wait for it in its completeness, there *must* be an answer to the "Why?"

But, further, in all this assault upon the Creator, in all this daring way of blaming Him who permits evil, it is forgotten that God has His rights. All such argument loses sight of His sovereignty. It has been truly said that the rights of property are in some sense recognised by all men, that those have more moral right to property who have inherited and improved it than those who have only inherited and not improved, and those have most moral right who have earned it, or acquired it, or made it by the sweat of brain and hand.

This last kind of right God has—so reason

shows us—over us the creatures of His hand. Men talk as if God had no right to speak of His creatures, no right to reveal so many things as He has revealed to His Church, no right to leave anything obscure, no right to allow any difficulty at all in the way of His creatures, no right to demand our homage, no right to claim the gift of our affections, no right to command the adhesion of our wills. So they talk, but reason says He has these rights. Yes, O wonderful and awful! He has a right to the chief place in our hearts, the highest recognition in our thoughts; He has the right to live *in* us and with us in an intimacy of love and completeness of worship which none other has a right to rival. He has a right to our reverence in devoting to Him speech and thought and time; He has a right to require us to ascend to Him in the intercourse of prayer, and to receive with reverent love the grace that He gives by His Holy Spirit and by the sacraments of the Catholic Church. He has a right to reveal to us what He pleases, and to veil from our eyes what He sees fit; He has a right to bid us wait to learn, and be patient that we may know.

Men forget God's rights or deny them. Reason asserts them all the same. It is doubtless humiliating to the pride which consumes us all

to have to grant God's sovereign rights. And this is greatly the reason of our perplexity. We are eaten up with pride; we will not submit; we cannot resign ourselves. We think it is beneath our dignity to do it, forsooth, unless we understand. "Unless I see," we say, "I will not believe." We may persuade ourselves that our difficulties are intellectual. Brethren, they are nothing of the kind. At bottom they are moral. We are wrapped in self-conceit. We are swallowed up with pride. We will not listen to the voice of reason, and so we forget or deny the sovereignty and the rights of God.

Two things are open to us: we may rebel or we may worship. Right reason says God has a right to keep us in the dark as to His doings, that if the "Why?" be not fully and clearly answered, our duty is to wait and worship. The greatest and the best of mankind have found *this* to be the way of enlightenment and the path of progress. "Mirabilis Deus in sanctis tuis, Deus Israel; ipse dabit virtutem et fortitudinem plebi suæ. Benedictus Deus" ("O God! wonderful art Thou in Thy saints, the God of Israel: He will give strength and power unto His people. Blessed be God.") Ah! yes, the way of light in perplexity, dear friends, is not insolent rebellion, but submission and worship. Resignation, not

rebellion, is reasonable service. That is the first answer of reason surely; that is the first answer of the Catholic Church.

Ah! dear soul in perplexity, thou who art stricken—heart-stricken by the spectacle of human sin and human sorrow—put down the wretched risings of rebellious pride. Be just at least, and recognise the rights of God. Submission to God is thy truest attitude. Worship and wait.

(2) But the voice of reason speaks again. Reason turns from God to us. What are we, it may well be asked, that we should expect to know all things? Brethren, we are flies on a cart-wheel; we are motes in a sunbeam. Is it reasonable, is it sane, to expect that we shall be able to interpret "all mysteries and all knowledge"? Nothing but maddening, blinding pride could lead us to imagine such a thing. We *do* see an ordered world; we are not wrong in believing that out of such disorder as perplexes us order will come. We *do* see that the gift of freedom is a necessary condition of being admitted to the ranks of moral beings. If we are not to be machines, we must have an opportunity to choose evil rather than good, if we please. Are we in a position to turn traitor to the dignity of our nature, and to assert that it would have been right and best

had we been made machines? "Shall the thing made say to Him who made it, 'Why hast Thou made me thus?'" I trow not. Why, we do not know, we cannot know, the full reach and range of what *is* right and best. We have glimmering lights, but that is all. Are we, forsooth, to decide that *we* are the measure of all things, that unless God Almighty fits exactly into our ways, and takes our view of things, and is "such an one" as we are, then God must be wrong? Brethren, this is wholly unreasonable. We can in no way be justified in forming such conclusions. This is the very delirium of pride, blinding reason. I it were ever so much demonstrated (as it is not) that by all rules of logic God in this matter must be wrong, well, after all, we have other powers to use besides logic. We have our "illative sense." We have the wide sweep of reason, and she teaches us at once, if we listen, that things may be better than we think for; that there is no reason to assert that *we* should all at once know all things; that God has a right to require us to be content with partial knowledge when we are shown clearly enough *our* duty. Yes, if the "Why?" as to perplexity is dashed in her face, reason surely answers—"Your true attitude is resignation, is submission." Reason surely answers —"Worship and wait."

VII.

(3) Ah, dear friends, other voices speak for God. If only we listen, if only we desire to learn, God "is justified when He is judged."

Listen to conscience. Here is a voice the reality and the force of which none can deny. Argue as men may as to its source and beginning, there it is!

It is a very real power, brethren: it is part of our being. It may vary in clearness, exactness, and force in different beings, and according to varying circumstances, but it somehow comes from without and from above. It speaks with authority. From it may come great consolations, from it also pangs as acute as those of any physical torture—yes, more acute by far. It seems to sleep, and yet again it wakens with tenfold more of force. It seems to be gone, and then there comes the awful silence, when in loneliness or darkness, or after sin accomplished, it rises up with warning look, and speaks decisive judgment. What does it say?

It pulverises excuses. It insists on my sin being *my own fault*. It asserts the majesty and glory of goodness, and the horror and hideousness of sin. It strips off disguises. It puts the creature in his proper place. It vindicates the rights of the Creator.

It has no mercy. It insists on stripping us of our pretences in arguing about our difficulties in accepting God in face of permitted evil, and compels us to see that our difficulty has been moral. It brings home to us the greatness and justice of God. It will make no parleying with our foolish pride. Under its light God is vindicated, we sinners stand self-condemned. It leaves us where all right reason leaves us—when we are confronted with the terrible "Why?"—not to debate but to obey, not to rebel but to worship and wait.

(4) Brethren, whenever we listen to those voices which insist upon the rights, upon the sovereignty of God, we learn that it is quite consistent with God's goodness that the answer to the question "Why does God permit evil, and not prevent it?" may well be to us in our present state, partial and misty and mysterious, and that our true attitude is submission and resignation, and our true duty to worship and to wait.

But there is another voice. Across the seas and continents it comes, across the changing generations of men, across the changeful tracts of time. Sweet and soft and low and tender -like the first sobbing of the breeze among the rushes by the river, or the first strains of its movements among the tuneful pines. Then louder, clearer, gathering volume, till

age after age can read the story, soul after soul can realise the truth. The voice that reveals and brings consolation, the voice that witnesses to God and comforts man, the voice so sweet to the believer's ear, so penetrating and soothing to the aching heart. Brethren, we hear the voice of Jesus Christ!

Ah! blessed and beautiful friend, nearest and dearest, comforter beyond all who console! Thou who art ever ready for those who labour and are heavy laden, lead us into the light—"Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Vindicate, for Thou canst, O Blessed, O Beloved One! the mysterious ways of God.

Brethren, Jesus Christ is, as the Catholic Faith teaches, God and Man. He is the Eternal Word. He speaks from God. What is His first answer to the impatient questionings as to the sins and sorrows of the world?

Well: (*a*) His first answer is, He entered Himself into the ranks of the fallen race. Whatever dangers arise to man from temptation and evil, He confronted them, He took His share. He had to fight with all the weakness and weariness of humanity upon Him, and to face the difficulty and tread the path in the darkness. And He *did* fight. He preferred to suffer to the utmost rather than relieve His sorrows or lighten His burdens by one thought or word disloyal

to His Father's will. And what did such coming mean? Since He is one with the Father, since He is the Eternal Word of the Father, it meant nothing less than this, dear friends: it meant the voice of the Lord God walking not now in the garden in the cool of the day—but in the wilderness in the height of the storm. It meant God saying, "Ah! my children, you cannot understand the mystery and perplexity of the world. I cannot tell you; you cannot bear it now; you shall know hereafter. Meanwhile, I take my share of it. I come amongst you and bear the worst of it. No trouble faces you that I do not face with you. You can trust that all is well, as I come and bear part of it. You may be sure that the judge of all the earth does right, as His voice by me is heard among you, and I am sharing all your woes. You can learn that rebellion is only sin and folly, that the soul in perplexity learns submission, that your part and your happiness is to worship and to wait."

(*b*) More still. We are right to dwell on the sovereignty of God, we are bound to recognise His rights. Yes, but what does the voice of Jesus say? "Creatures, ye have indeed a Sovereign; obey Him." Yes, but also, "Children, ye have indeed a Father—*love*."

Surely, dear friends, here is light in the darkness.

The ways of any of you an earthly father—may be, often must be, perplexing to a child. Let the child learn to love his father—why, his last thought in perplexity is to rebel. His little arms are round your neck, his head upon your shoulder, his cheek against your cheek. You require something he scarcely understands; your ways seem to him perplexing; but all the same he knows the place he has within your heart. He can *trust* when he cannot *understand*. So our Redeemer comes, reveals the Father, and our mad thoughts of rebellion vanish as we find a ground of trust in a Father's love.

(*c*) Redeemer! Yes, He who is one with the Father, He who is the very and eternal God, was "perfect though suffering." If we had fallen into the desperate mistake of Socinianism, this would be no comfort. One good man the more, even the best, to suffer, would only add to our perplexity and sorrow. Not so when we grip the truth, when we hold the Catholic Faith. Jesus Christ is the Eternal Word; He is everlasting God; He is the Revealer of the Father, He is one with the Father. His sufferings are a mighty mystery, but they are—and generations of the perplexed and sorrow-laden have felt them so—they are a powerful appeal to the heart. It has been truly felt—felt deep down in men's lives, felt wide and far in the ranks of men—

it has been truly felt that terrible, most terrible as is the empire of evil, over against it in might, in majesty, in beauty, there stands the empire of redeeming love.

VIII.

Ah, dear friends, these are voices we surely cannot but listen to. Better are they in their truth and tenderness than the angry strife of controversial and philosophic scorn. Granted that all the answers to the perplexing question cannot be fully given us now, voices like these, so penetrating and powerful, tell us from eternity that an answer there is. Indeed, the mystery is for our training. We are fitted for a higher life by the cultivation or formation of character. God, our Sovereign, our Father, is the great educator. He is training us by that Faith which is the foundation of Christian character, by that Hope which is its energy, by that Love which is its crown, for that better country, where mists and clouds will have melted before the sunlight, where we shall know as we are known.

For, indeed, in face of a mystery, and in view of the revelation of a Father's love, we have the proudest position of the creature—a sense of dependence on the Being from whom we have

received our life. Pride is crushed: humility is ours. That is, truth, truth about ourselves and God, wrought into our souls. Thus, by the power of the Spirit, we gain the fundamental grace, "the grace that brings down all grace." And hence comes real goodness, for hence comes love. Love is not blind: love is the great revealer. We see God in Christ in His moral majesty, and also in the tenderness of His compassion; and "having not seen" with bodily eyes, but clearly with the eyes of the Spirit, "we love." Humility and love produce submission, resignation, trust. And the answer of the Catholic Faith is: "This life is not everything; there is another world." Iron is good for nothing unless it pass through the fire: your character is good for nothing unless it be tried by the mysteries of life. Through all, if you will, you can see your Father's face of benediction; you can learn the unfathomable love of God in Christ.

O soul, amid the clouds of this world, do not be angry, do not rebel: only love and wait. Suffering itself, and the sorrow of your fellows, will give you opportunities of living the Christian life. Keep near to God; your faith will not stagger. Love God in Christ. You will see through the darkness to the breaking of the day. Wait and love; love and wait. Cleave and ever cleave to the ways of

God and the path of due progress. All is not an unmeaning riddle : all will yet be plain. Only love Him, only keep close to Him, only trust Him, only believe. O chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely ! whom have I in heaven but Thee ? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison with Thee. My heart and my flesh faileth, but God is the strength of my *heart*, and my portion for ever.

LOVE AND SORROW

"Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows."—ISAIAH liii. 4.

LOVE AND SORROW

LIFE, as we have seen, may be divided into labour and sorrow. It is doubtless a strange mystery, and the depth of the mystery we cannot entirely fathom. Sometimes we imagine that God might have told us more plainly what it means; but thoughts of this kind are for the most part prompted by impatience, and there can be no doubt that in the long and steady training of life's experiences, if we are seeking God and desiring to do His will, the mystery does to a great extent unravel itself and we begin to see light through the gloom.

For if God has not plainly spoken to us by words, He has by deeds, which are more eloquent and more revealing still. If He has not been able to make us understand the meaning of the mysteries of life, there is doubtless good reason for it. Perhaps it would not have been good for our moral training; perhaps we should not have been able to bear, in our present condition, the full statement of the truth.

But however this may be, God has come among us in the ranks of humanity and, so to speak, taken His chance *with* us. By the Incarnation of the Eternal Word, He has seemed to say to us, "You cannot indeed enter into the mystery; I cannot explain it; but at least I will take my share of it, be one among you, and so give you confidence that all is well." If indeed, then, life is "labour and sorrow;" if these be the heritage of man, there is but one alleviation possible, but one thing that makes "labour and sorrow" bearable, and that is love. Christianity teaches us—what is of the first importance to believe and remember—that Christ is the "Man of sorrows," and that He is the revealer and embodiment of everlasting love. It is not irrelevant, then, to the conditions of a life like ours to contemplate these two factors in our being - Love and Sorrow.

I.

Vaguely at any rate, but very certainly, we have all of us some idea what love means. It is, in fact, a fundamental thought, and difficult therefore to dissect and define, but well understood by the human mind. In love of the most genuine and the highest kind there must be freedom. "Liberty of choice," it has been truly said, is one of its conditions, and

there is in every soul a deep *need* of loving and being loved. It is then remarkable at first sight, but it is certainly true, that God *demands* our love as a duty. At first sight, I say, this may seem unreasonable, but it really only means that the soul should be true to itself; love, if it be true even in this life, has nothing to do with either age or rank; it is founded upon beauty, some beauty of soul and character. Man, of course, can be deceived and make mistakes; in his impatience or amidst the shadows that surround him, he may refuse to see, or he may be unable to see, real moral and spiritual beauty. But God is never deceived, as He never deceives us. He knows that He is the primal and the perfect beauty, the inexhaustible source and the exquisite ideal of all that is really good. Not to love Him is to fail to love the perfection of beauty, and whilst we are free to choose or to refuse Him, He demands our love as the greatest blessing to ourselves, which is another way of saying that He demands that we should be true to the highest things. But more than this, God not only demands our love, He *gives* us the power to love Him, and supplies the means for the exercise of that power.

Consider this, dear friends; all things come of God, all the things which make up the blessings and opportunities and gifts of life. This is a statement

which cannot be denied by any serious Theist, not to say by any serious Christian; if it be true, what follows from it? Why, that we owe Him gratitude for all things, that we owe Him the honour of our hearts.

But further, life, whenever there is life, is always in movement. Desire is a motive power; it drives our being on, and it always tends towards finding its rest and satisfaction in something beyond itself. Desire is the raw material out of which is formed sanctity or sin; misused and corrupted desire makes sin; purified and sanctified desire is *the* constituent of holiness; lofty and purified desire therefore is closely allied to love. The law of its being is, not only to find one's rest in another, but to give oneself to and for another with unstinted generosity. I pause to remind you that Holy Scripture endorses this by the way in which it speaks as to the Eternal Word; "My delight is to be among the sons of men." I pause to remind you further that as the desire of the Eternal Word, which *is* the desire of the Godhead, has been to be among the sons of men, so such is the teaching of Christianity —He has given Himself for us with an entirely unstinted generosity of self-sacrifice.

But to go on. Love not only recognises the greatness of God's gifts, by its very nature it demands a

Personal God. It is strictly impossible to love a force; no man, by the constitution of his being, can *love* what is called "Nature," no man, by the constitution of his being, can *love* "Humanity." For "Nature" can only mean the sum of things as they are—soulless forces, and threatening powers; and "Humanity" can only mean the human race as it actually exists, or has existed—unmeasured multitudes, representing in many individuals indeed a measure of goodness, and in many more almost immeasurable crime. To neither of these can the human heart really give its love, and the only other possible meaning that can be assigned to these is that of abstract ideas, and it is folly to talk of *loving* mere abstractions. This consideration alone opens our eyes to the baseless folly of such systems of heresy as Agnosticism and Positivism. Love towards God is possible, so long, and only so long, as we are dealing with a Personal God.

II.

And then again, all things around us are marked by change: this is a mere truism. We do not need Revelation, we do not need Holy Scripture to teach us the truth of such a statement; it is a perplexing but inherent necessity of our condition; the fact presses upon the human mind with a tremendous

pressure. Great systems, great nations, great legislatures exhaust the vocabulary of make-believe and pretence, in order to close our eyes to this inevitable necessity; poetry and romance exhaust the efforts of genius to express the keenness of the sense of it, as it touches each individual life. As it passes across the stage of this world, the poor human heart, battling against it, drives us into the erection of monuments and the planting of tombstones, to hide from our eyes as far as may be the completeness and tragedy of change. Our own very being, not merely our bodies, but our minds and characters, are touched by change; some decline, some grow more impoverished, some lose the nobility of love, and the warmth of enthusiasm, and the generosity of self-forgetting passion as time goes on; others do not disgrace their past but grow to a greater strength, to a calmer and more perfect love—"the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Doubtless there lie in the law of change infinite possibilities of greatness and advance; but, say what we may, it is also charged with tragedy, it implies clouds which cross the sun-path, and forces which fill our hearts with tears. Now love is ever demanding the unchanging; the unchanging indeed is needed to explain and measure the meaning of this constant change. "You must have an Absolute,"

it has been truly said, "to account for the Relative"; you must have a Real, to *satisfy* the Ideal. Surely, then, human love, so certain amidst all the changing phases of this life, points direct to the love of God.

For think, allowing for this law of change, what human love must mean. In this life, such is the law of our being, we are, for the most part, provided with objects of love; the love of father and child, the love of wife and husband, the love of man to man, the love of man to woman—in so far forth as these affections are high, and good, and beautiful, they are but broken reflections of the Divine Beauty. If these are to be loved, then so is He, from whom they come and who giveth all: God then commends His love to us by giving to us objects of affection which can only be shadows of Himself.

We know from the revelation of the Faith that, within the limits of the Godhead itself, there has been the eternal play of a spotless and infinite affection. We are reminded by the Christian revelation as to the three subsistencies in the Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—that we do not worship a lonely and unloving God; and that which is in, which is the very essence of, His Being, He has extended beyond Himself by pouring it upon His creatures, and demanding a return of it, in order to

make us happy. In the whole of the animal creation, there is some faint sketch, it has been truly said, of different points of divine perfections. In man, there is the image of God, blurred and darkened indeed by the mystery of the Fall, but an image still; man, therefore, has the power to love worthy objects, and, above all therefore, to love the worthiest object, the perfect Beauty. He has indeed created us for the purpose, for the joy of loving Him and of, so to speak, bathing in *His* all other loves. We are free indeed to choose or to refuse the highest, but it is a duty that we owe to our very being—to love God.

III.

Brethren, we all know perfectly well that in all real affection there must be a drawing of each to the other; there must be trust and sympathy. In order that this may be, there must be community of nature and nearness and approachability. One of the saddest things in this sad world is a capacity for loving which can meet with no response. Is this sadness the inevitable condition of our race? God is invisible; He seems far away; He is of a nature different from ours. How then can we love Him? The answer is, we certainly cannot unless certain conditions are fulfilled. Of these the first is that

He Himself should give us the power. Blessed be His holy name, this He does. Sweet thoughts of God come more and more into the heart of the Christian. "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts," says an apostle, "by His spirit, which He has given us." It is a teaching of the Catholic Faith that the grace of charity is given in germ to the soul in baptism. It grows by the nurture of *actual* graces in answer to prayer, and it is a power by which we love God for His own dear sake, and others for the sake of God.

And the second condition is that to which we have already referred, that there should be some of those natural preparations through the exercise of human affection for the highest love of all. These human loves, among other offices that they perform, suggest to us our immortality and our power of loving for ever. In all human affection there is this hint of eternity. Never yet in the history of our race did any loving heart propose to the object of its devotion that there should be a *term* placed to the play of its affection. Love has no frontiers. "I will love you for so many days or weeks or years, and then my love shall end," is an impossible statement from a loving heart. Natural affection implies eternity.

And then, again, the third condition has been

well fulfilled. God cannot be spoken of now as unimagined and invisible, since the coming of Jesus Christ. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" is the statement of our Lord Himself. Those who saw Him, saw God; and though we do not see Him with actual eyes ourselves, we know from the careful and inspired records from His earthly life precisely what He was like.

It is true He is now to us invisible, but we can see him with the eyes of faith; and the Church which He has left behind Him in the world is a constant witness of His divine presence. The most sceptical observer cannot deny that the whole history of the Catholic Church—allowing for all the sins and all the mischiefs which have marked its course—has been a history of extraordinary human improvement, and it is quite impossible to account adequately for its history and influence except on the supposition of the presence and support promised it by Jesus Christ.

Those who believe in the Christian revelation believe that constant intercourse may be maintained with God through Jesus Christ by the mystery of prayer; and all who hold the Catholic Faith believe that a still closer intimacy is established through the mystery of the Blessed Sacrament by the offering of the great sacrifice once for all offered on

the cross, and continually presented before God on the altars of the Church, and still more in that closest form of communion when we receive the body and blood of Christ and are made "one with Him and He with us." The need, therefore, and longing of the soul to be brought near to the object of its love and worship is fully satisfied by Jesus Christ. It was the sense of this reality of the love, the personal love, and the nearness of God in Christ which overcame St. Paul, and it is the love of Christ which overcomes Christians now when once they realise what He has done and what He is doing for them. As that grand ideal grows upon their souls, they realise not only more and more the beauty of goodness, but they realise that that goodness is enshrined in and expressed by the Son of God Himself, whom they can love as the human heart can only love a *person*, and who represents to them and brings near to them the greatness and beauty of God, whom thus they can love with a personal devotion. Once let a man realise that life is mysteriously full of sin and sorrow; that he himself is in danger of being overcome by what is wrong, and needs help and strength to supply him with power for a manly self-conquest and a loving self-sacrifice; that God Himself cannot prevent the evil if He is to respect man's freedom; that we cannot pos-

sibly be noble-hearted and true and good unless we have the chance of being base and false and bad if we please ; that to endure temptation and overcome it is the condition of growth in grace ; that to hold the faith with unflinching determination against all temptations to unbelief is the condition of fuller insight into truth ; that we need the peace of belief and conviction for our minds, and of forgiveness and newness of life for our consciences ; that it is no light matter to strive steadily against the evil that is in the world, no light matter to overcome impure thoughts, uncharitable judgments, evil speaking, selfishness, insincerity, cowardice, slackness, inattention to higher duty, irreverence or laziness in prayer ; no light matter to maintain the continual activity of a watchful and honest will -- he who in any measure realises these things begins to have some faint glimpse of how God loves him and longs to help him, as he sees the tenderness and humiliation of the cross of Christ representing that real love of God.

Yes, brethren, we may learn to love God not only by the grace of charity which He has poured into our hearts in baptism, in confirmation, in the blessed gift of the body and blood of Christ ; we can learn to love God not only through those who are very near and very dear to us, whom *He* has

given us, and as to whom *He* has also supplied us with the love that we have for them; but we can also learn to love God by the contemplation of the life and character of, and by close communion with, Jesus Christ our Lord.

He is the love of God made manifest. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory—the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

IV.

But if life be, as we have seen, justly enough described by the Psalmist as "labour and sorrow," it is just that love that we need. Love is the sunshine of life, which alone can conquer the darkest clouds and bring back the clear shining after the rain. And to believe that perfect love—the love of God in Christ—is really presiding over all, is the true support which Christianity offers to us in our battle of life.

But we go one step farther. Love and Sorrow go hand in hand in this world. To love deeply and truly—the greatest blessing that God gives His creatures—is sooner or later to pay the tax of sorrow. Is it not, then, strengthening and consoling to learn the truth which the prophet proclaims in

the text, that He who reveals the Father's love to us, that He who loves us with the love of a Redeemer, has not only Himself entered into this mystery of mourning, but also that He comes to our help in our greatest trial, "that He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows"?

For Sorrow is one of those deep things which lies closest to the heart of life; and, like all such deepest things, it is of course impossible to define. The sudden and mysterious *nuances* of our deepest feelings lie far beyond the frontier of definition, not to say of expression.

"Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean."

In part, perhaps, this is false; in its fulness, indeed, it is true. We know up to a certain point the meaning of the strokes of sorrow; but beyond that there is a far-stretching ocean, with the raging of waves and the terrible music of the sobbing sea, vanishing in a dim, horizon line, mysterious in its glory or its grey.

Who, indeed, can tell the mystery of tears? This we *can* say, however: sorrow is a language understood by all; it sweeps through all the moods and tenses of the human heart; it, like love, knows no frontiers. The heart-ache and the heart-break embody a universal speech; some of the fiercest

forces of Nature, as we know it now, are space and time. Sorrow blots out space; it ignores or even destroys time. It is a real leveller, proclaiming "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity," more really and as persistently as the maddest revolutionary frenzy. It makes no account of rank; it never thinks of dignity. The voice of Antigone in her sisterly suffering, the voice of David in his fatherly despair, ring back to us as true as the widow or the orphan who shed their bitter tears in the neighbouring street.

Sorrow! It is more than that. It is personal, it is intimate; in the last resort, it is all your own. Can I tell you, can you tell me, why the absence of those loving eyes, that tender voice, that hand that clasped my hand, makes life an iceberg where once it was a garden of God? Can I tell you, can you tell me, why the sky is grey and the winds are chilly, when, only the other day, the one had sunshine and the other warmth, because those little arms were round my neck and those deep grey eyes looking love in mine, or because that serious young voice asked me serious questions which I answered with my hand in blessing on a curly head? Can you tell me, can I tell you, why that house, that once was brightened with the sunlight of poetry, is the deadest, coldest prose, from the awful silence

where no footsteps fall, from the terrible stillness where dear voices sound no more? Can I tell you, can you tell me, why that child moves me to the depth of my being by the mere patient sadness of her dark eyes filled with tears? Can I tell you, can you tell me, why the presence of that other filled the home with sunlight, and why my heart is aching, breaking, now her fair face and her golden head are gone? No. Sorrow is an intimate language, it is an intimate fact; it is terrible, most terrible. But remember, it may be sanctified; for when Love meets Death, or Distance (which is the twin-brother of Death), the consequence is Sorrow.

It witnesses, therefore, very often, to our nobility and our fall. Your Ruths, your Rizpahs, your Jacobs by the tomb of Rachel, your Niobes, and, above all, above all, your Mary by the cross, remind us indeed of the tragedy of our existence, but remind us as well of the nobility of our nature.

Deep sorrow, where the trial is severe and real, means a true heart. God detests heartlessness, for God is Love. Now, no religion has ever dared to deal with this as Christianity; no system of thought has ever touched it like the Catholic Faith. It is the Church, and the Church only, when she does her duty, that in every sacrament, in every

prayer, in every mystery, deals with the two great facts—Love and Sorrow.

If we are true to ourselves, and have sinned, the result is sorrow—the sorrow of repentance, which worketh life; because we love goodness, in spite of our faults, because we love God. If we see others sin, we suffer for their failures, because the forming of Christ in all souls is the ideal desire of the Christian.

If death or distance separate us from those we love, we still have sorrow, because the union of love is the need of the human heart and the ideal of the Christian Faith.

Where are we to turn? where is there strength? where is there comfort? The dreams of philosophy and the systems of heresy are idle tales. There is One, and One only, who represents to the uttermost the perfection of love and the very depth of anguish. To lay our sins and troubles upon Him is possible. To do so, is to find One who can bear them when none other can, and One who can change them from the darkness of their natural mourning into the glow of an eternal joy.

"He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." "*Stat crux dum volvitur orbis.*" The cross remains in power as long as the revolving

worlds. Why should we despond? Why should we despair? Sorrow is "a cruel fellowship, a priestess in the vaults of Death;" but the fellowship is made deeper and sweeter by a touch of the cross, and the vaults are freed from their grimness and illuminated with glory by the sepulchre of Christ.

"He hath borne our sins and carried our sorrows." Let us bring to Him our sins; let us share with Him our sorrows. The weight may still be heavy, for we have human hearts, but at least it will be bearable; and the sorrows of the Passion of our Master are the prelude to Easter Day.

PRAYER

"And He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray and not to faint."—St. Luke xviii. 1.

PRAYER

IT is thus that our Lord speaks of the great duty of prayer. If life can be described as full of "labour and sorrow," there must be for it, if we are to meet it in a hopeful spirit, some such exercise as prayer. Every Christian acknowledges that this is needed. The soul which is imprisoned in time and looks for eternity requires an outlet. Even unbelievers acknowledge the subjective benefits of prayer, although, with an astonishing inconsistency, they seem to imagine that it is possible for prayer to be effectively exercised without a strict belief in a real and living object placed before the soul. Anyhow, taking the view of life which we have taken, as a scene of "labour and sorrow" here, with its higher opportunities beyond the grave, the characteristic mark of a religious person is the practice of prayer. If this be so, it is well for us to examine the ground and meaning of this mysterious and necessary exercise of human activity.

I.

Well, brethren, it must always be remembered that any such exercise to be true and thorough must be based upon a real virtue. Virtue is a form of manly strength, and no really Christian exercise can possibly exist apart from some such form. Our first question, therefore, is, What is that form of strength which is implied by prayer? The answer is—Hope. Well, what is Hope? Hope, as theologians define it, is a supernatural gift, given freely and gratuitously by God to the soul. In germ it is given in holy baptism, and is increased and developed by exercises of piety and by a good life. Further, it is a supernatural virtue—that is, a force or an aptitude by which the soul is disposed to wait with confidence upon God. It is said to be supernatural because the hope of the Christian comes directly from God, and the objects towards which it stretches forth are for the most part blessings to which man could never attain by his unaided efforts, and to which by his mere natural constitution he could have no right. It is then defined to be a supernatural virtue by which the soul awaits with confidence all that is promised to it by God. Every supernatural virtue has its likeness or prototype in natural virtues, with which our nature is endowed

even before and apart from supernatural grace. So it is with hope; and much that may be said of it as a supernatural gift may also be said of it as a natural endowment.

Hope is, in fact, the enlivening power of life. It is a human need; it is deep and far reaching. Man by the very constitution of his nature desires happiness. He may interpret the phrase in many different ways, but in the long run, whatever be his interpretation of it, he cannot but desire to be happy. As he is subject to the law of change, as his life is labour and sorrow, if he desires happiness he must exercise the energy of hope, for he must look on. But if this arise from the necessity of our being, it will be rooted in the nature of things, and we do not waste our time if we ask ourselves what is at the root of this imperious necessity.

Brethren, I am only quoting the thoughts of Christian teachers in every age when I say that the necessity of hope implies that there must be an object—a supreme object—towards which the soul is tending. No man lives without, consciously or unconsciously, an object before him. We see commonly before our eyes certain evident objects that men propose to themselves. It is scarcely possible for a being like man to go on

for long in life without asking himself seriously what is his *raison d'être*, why he lives at all. Some men, especially when they are quite young, seem to live for prowess, for success; physical strength is to them, as it is to society in its younger stages, the most noble of all objects. To this there is a good side, although, like other things, it may be allowed to run into excess. In our own nation the great stress that is laid upon various forms of athletic exercise in the young has its distinctly noble side, and yet, we are well aware, may be much overdone. The cultivation of physical prowess—if it becomes a leading object in life—is, after all, little more than the cultivation of the powers of a singularly gifted animal, and as man is much more than an animal, it can never *satisfy* the conditions of the problem of his life. Besides that, strength passes away with increasing years; this may be all very well in a way and in its proper place, but man needs something more than physical prowess as the object of his life.

It is a mere truism to say that as civilisation advances, men much more commonly place before them as their object intellectual achievement. It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of drawing out and making full use of the powers of the human mind; never was this more fully felt than it is felt

in our own day. It is true that our systems of education are narrow and incomplete; it is true that our foolish habit of allowing all things, even the greatest things, to be coloured by passing political superstitions, tends to cramp to a great degree our real educational progress, and yet—even though it be in our one-sided and narrow English way—we certainly have felt in this generation the great importance of educational effort. But all mental achievement can, after all, only touch a part of human nature. Improvement in the human mind is not improvement of the man *himself*, and we know that evil, and even wickedness, are not inconsistent with great abilities and far-reaching knowledge: the Evil One himself is probably one of the cleverest and most instructed of living beings. Then again, so earnest has been the natural longing of human nature for an adequate object of hope, earnest men, both before the Christian era and since, have propounded schemes of philosophy, making virtue the object of life. This indeed is a lofty ideal, but it is too impersonal for man. Man is a personal being, and he requires a stronger motive and a more living force than abstract virtue can supply: every such object of his hope, in some measure, fails. As secondary objects these are very far from being unworthy, but as final objects they will not do. Why? Because in the long run they

are unsatisfying and imperfect ; unsatisfying, because they do not touch the man *himself*, imperfect because they are restricted in their range : only "out of the heart are the issues of life." The play of our affections is the greatest source of earthly happiness, and none of these objects can really give them play ; even the objects of our dearest earthly solicitude do not remain exactly as we have known them ; the most pathetic thought in life is the thought of absence, of separation, of change. Nothing can withstand it, nothing can resist it ; with inexorable step it marches on, and we know in the brightest moments that our skies are inevitably doomed, sooner or later, to be darkened with clouds. It is possible to consider such things in a pessimistic spirit, it is possible to be morbidly alive to them. Such is the fate of those who rise above mere brute callousness, and yet have no devotion to religion. It is possible however, also to view these things with courage and constancy and more, with brightness, even though with eyes not undimmed by tears ; we need an object which will embrace all others and keep the balance true. There is such a thing as a living hope and the object of that living hope is the living God.

II.

At first we are staggered by the thought, at first this appears a mere dream, but as we *think* more earnestly, we find it is inevitable and accurate. The great Apostle declares that even now we can see God dimly, and that that is the first whisper of a completer vision. "Now," he says, "we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face." The beloved disciple with his eagle eye fully saw the same truth; his affections were warmed and his joy was kindled by the thought of a future union, which stimulated his hope. "Beloved," he says, "now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." The same force of hope possesses the penitent St. Peter; no one can have needed it more than he, and no one did it more perfectly possess. There "are given unto us," he says, "exceeding great and precious promises; that by them ye might be partakers of the divine nature." He is positively *living* in hope; no statement of Scripture can there be of greater strength in its confidence of a thorough and satisfactory union with God.

But even if we had not these statements of Holy

Scripture, distinct as they are, we have teaching which comes from our own nature and which is at once emphatic and clear. What is it, I ask you, that our reason, the intellectual department of our nature, demands? In the midst of a world of vast perplexities, it can only find rest and satisfaction in *truth*. The secret of the delight felt by great mathematicians and great thinkers and great discoverers, when they have attained to any solution of a problem which has interested them, is the necessary satisfaction which they have felt when their reason is brought into contact with truth. What is it, again I ask you, that brings peace to the conscience and to the moral sense? This: the clear view of, the fast embrace of, perfect goodness. The pains of conscience are often far more acute than pains which arise from physical suffering; these pains are caused by an absence of goodness, and the sense of coalescing with, or agreeing to, evil, which is alien to man's nature. Let the moral sense be brought into close contact with, into fast embrace of, goodness, then and then only, there is satisfaction and peace. Again, I ask you, where is rest and satisfaction to be found for that department of our nature which we call the heart? Above all things, man is made to love, and there can be no real rest for the heart unless it find an object adequate to

satisfy the affectionate nature. It is beauty which attracts, and so vast is the capacity of love in our nature that nothing can finally and perfectly satisfy it except perfect beauty.

Brethren, these things alone can be found in their perfection of kind and degree in God. All truths gather up in Him, and no lesser truth will give final rest to the reason: all goodness is the very texture of His moral nature, and no lesser goodness can perfectly satisfy ours. Not only His character but His very being—so Holy Scripture tells us—is love; and the human heart which is yearning with its almost infinite power, for affection, can never find it finally and perfectly but in Him. St. Augustine was right when he said, "Our hearts are hot and restless till they rest in Thee." It is well seen then, dear friends, that not only the deep teachings of apostles, but also the deep teachings of our own natural constitution, give us a true and final object towards which hope can look forward. If, as I have said, supernatural hope requires an object, then that all-comprehending object is the living God.

Of course, I am well aware that when one speaks in this way of the object of hope, one is liable at once to be accused of "other-worldliness." It is possible that this accusation may once have had some truth in it. I am sure there is no truth in it now. Modern

"Christianity" is becoming so very "social," and so very "philanthropic," that it is tending to lose sight of the other world altogether, practically to banish the supernatural, and to treat this life, with its comforts and conveniences, as the one object worthy of thought. "Altruism"—to use the special jargon of the time—shows a great concern at highest for the education of others, from which religion is to be carefully banished. In its more ordinary expressions, it is greatly concerned with physical comforts and has pretty well given up all ideas of saving souls. This violent exaggeration, which is, alas! too common now, may perhaps be a consequence of an unreal "other-worldliness"; but it seems to be leading modern Christians to join hands pretty closely with anti-Christ; anyhow, one is almost driven nowadays to apologise, if one ventures to speak of something distinctly religious and not having to do with a "social problem." You need not, however, fear, dear friends, that the Christian's hope is altogether transcendental, and has no concern with this present world. It has; and I can but express its power and beauty in relation to things present by quoting to you the words of a great thinker, and a great teacher, alas! no longer with us.

"The temper of hopefulness is not only concerned with the great things of hereafter; it has to do with

our feelings towards things here. There must often be much in the course of things which interest us now, to distress and alarm us: evils which seem without remedy, defeats which seem final, perplexities through which we cannot see our way, dark and gloomy clouds rising in menace over our familiar world. To hope, seems to us, then, like deluding ourselves; we call it optimism, an instinctive dislike to pain, a determination not to see the cruel truth. And yet how often has it appeared in the upshot of things, that if in the darkest times any had been bold enough to hope, he would have been amply justified? . . . . We are but shortsighted creatures. We see and feel so clearly what is immediate and pressing, that we leave out of account all the subtle and complex forces, mighty and ever active, though we do not discern them, that are, perhaps, in the long run, more eventful and decisive than anything we can now see. It is almost proverbial how often the prophecies of the wisest and most sagacious—prophecies of evil and of good, calm and deliberate forecasts which seem to rest on unanswerable reasons—are almost ludicrously falsified in the event. It is unsafe to prophesy, it is more than wise, it is our duty to hope. God's mercy has never deserted us. It has allowed the darkest hours to pass over us, the severest trials, the keenest and bitterest sorrows.

His returning mercy has come back, perhaps in a very different form from what we expected: it has not restored what was lost; it has not revived what had perished; but it has given us something to take the place of what is gone. He has varied the condition of our service. But He has come back to us in mercy: come back to us in His bounty and quickening grace; come back to us in His manifold, His inexhaustible wisdom, bringing new good strangely out of surmised evil, compensating, refashioning, developing, adapting. Surely this is the wonderful experience of our most disappointing and disobedient and yet enduring Christendom. We need not blind ourselves to facts; we have our part to do, and must deal as we may, and as we ought, with what is dangerous and hurtful. But the God of hope calls to us out of the darkness; and we are unfaithful to Him if, in our distress and fear, we shut our ears to His discourse, and dwell despondingly on a future which is in His hands."

This expresses nobly, as nobly as can be, the exercise of hope on things of the present time. Hope then, my friends, is a supernatural virtue, a virtue which stretches towards an object, not only of surpassing glory in eternity, but of real value in time, and that object is the living God.

III.

But if hope has thus an adequate object, it also is justified by resting on sufficient grounds. The Christian's hope rests, in the first place, on God's power. We know that that power is only limited by the necessities of His moral nature. We are very sure that He has power to do what is best for us, except in so far as we, in the exercise of a freedom which He cannot but respect, may oppose our wills to His. We may have perfect confidence in His power to help us, and so far forth we are justified in cherishing hope. But we rest not only upon His power : the Christian's hope rests also on His goodness. Our Lord argues, in the Sermon on the Mount, from the conscious willingness of parents to do their best for their children, that God will certainly give the spiritual help which is needed to those that ask Him. The perfection of the divine nature, implies God's readiness to help His creatures in all good things. One result, indeed, of the confusion into which the Fall has thrown human nature is that, in the perversity of our opposition to goodness, we will not trust God. Even here on earth, and among sinful creatures like ourselves, we gain a certain confidence from our persuasion of the goodness of any character with which we have

to deal. Well for us if, by meditation and prayer, we acquire the habit of trusting God ; for upon that trust, which is the legitimate outcome of a belief in His goodness, is built to a very great extent the structure of an energetic and supernatural hope.

But our hope is further justified by the actual promises of God. "Exceeding great and precious promises" is an apostolic phrase for them ; and they are promises of great definiteness, and of what may be called tangible quality. The promise of a Redeemer has been made tangible and plain by the coming of the Eternal Word into the ranks of humanity. The Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ is a standing promise of the love and goodness of God. "He that spared not His own Son"—such is an apostolic argument—how could He fail to give us anything and everything which is necessary for our salvation? Similarly, to say nothing of the distinct statements of promises in Holy Scripture, the existence of the Catholic Church is, so to speak, a standing promise from God. Here we have, amidst all the changes of the world, this wonderful society, of which since our baptism we are members. It has had its vicissitudes ; it has passed through many changes of customs and men's manners ; it has used all sorts of phases of civilisation ; it has employed the friendship of friends and

the opposition of enemies; it has been externally rent by unhappy quarrels, introduced within its very borders; it has seen empires rise and fall, and it may see many more still: while it can never be shaken, never overthrown. Here it is, with those distinct marks which differentiate it from all (even the most religious) of the separated bodies; the witness of the three Creeds, especially the Creed of Nicæa; the administration of the sacraments, the greater ones and the lesser, according to the mind of our Lord and His Apostles, and the three-fold ministry of Bishops, Priests and Deacons. Here it is, a standing promise, as well as a means and power of grace and truth, for all who seek. Surely our hope is justified by the power, by the goodness, by the promises of God Himself.

IV.

But this supernatural hope, as it is a supernatural gift, so also it requires the making of supernatural effort by ourselves. If it is to grow in the soul and become a real spring of strength, we must make sacrifices for it. God has not only given us assurance of His help now, but He has placed before us a perfectly wonderful future, which is entirely within our reach if we choose to have it.

For this He created us ; for this He has taught us and given us His grace ; for this He places us under trial ; for this He gives us our part to act on the stage of time. If once we *think* of this the world becomes a changed thing. Surely our narrowness, our pettiness, our conventionalities, our slavery to custom, our respectable worldliness, must be cramped, must be restrained, and our nobler and more generous thoughts enlarged, if we open our minds to this. It is clear, then, that to keep such a hope vividly before us we must be prepared to sacrifice something for, indeed, hope is the energy of faith. It is, or rather it requires, a real and steady effort of will. That is why it is a moral power ; that is why it is a force valuable for the training of character. To use the grace which is given requires a real exertion of our will to resist the attractions—the seductions—of downheartedness and despondency. There are, indeed, two enemies to the powerful exercise of supernatural hope. First, there is presumption. It is all too possible for the human mind, led away by the madness of its self-reliant pride, to imagine that it can achieve spiritual successes without loyalty to the methods enjoined by God. This is presumption : against this sin, so sure to lead to heresy and then to moral falls, the humble and well-founded hope of

the Christian is the best preservative. Few things, perhaps, have been more destructive of the humility and "sweetness" of the Christian character than the heretical teaching, not uncommon among bodies separated from the Church, as to "assurance." We only escape from this dangerous doctrine, especially if we are by nature of sanguine temperament, by a strong grasp of Catholic teaching as to the virtue of hope. We shall not throw ourselves unnecessarily in the way of temptation; we shall not wantonly neglect the means of grace; we shall not be careless as to purifying our hearts and our motives, if we are the children of a living hope.

And the other enemy is despair. Despair and despondency are dangerous enemies to many characters. These are defeated by hope. It is, so it has been wisely said, a simple duty to hope; it is a sin against God's high goodness, a crime against the order of His teaching not to hope. "Is it not a duty, in solemn and quiet self-recollection, to put before our thoughts that unbroken and continuous line which joins this very present moment with that hour which certainly is to arrive, when we *must* be changed, when we *may* be changed into the spotless blessedness of the saints of God?" To each of us it may be said with truth, "You, you yourself, with your trouble, your temptations, your sin, small or

great, your conscious weakness, your insensibility and ignorance, yet you yourself are one of those of whom, if you will, all that wondrous future will — must—come true." It is our duty to hope, and hope conquers despair.

v.

Such, surely, are some of the Catholic teachings about the supernatural virtue of hope. Now the Catholic faith is always practical, and every virtue of this sort on which it dwells implies a practical duty. This brings us face to face with that majestic and mysterious privilege and practice—the practice and privilege of prayer. Prayer is the voice of a supernatural hope, and by prayer that hope is nourished and enlarged. Prayer implies energy and eagerness in the one who prays, and a willing mind and a loving heart in the one to whom the prayer is addressed. It is the voice of a real need; it is conditioned by the character and the revelation of God. If it is made in faith and hope; that is, if it is real prayer, it will never be unanswered, although, as God sees farther than we see, the answer may come in an unexpected form. Prayer is the very life-breath of the soul. As the movement of the lungs is necessary for the life of the body to make use of the air we breathe, so prayer is needful for the soul

that it may breathe the air of eternity. The joy and blessing of prayer is felt by those who sincerely use it, and, like other things, it grows by habit and is strengthened by practice. To be a religious man is to be a praying man. If we will, we can cast all our care upon God, and carry to him every anxiety, every pleasure, every sorrow, with the confidence that however long He may appear to keep us waiting, or however different the answer may seem to be from that which we would have hoped for or expected, still an answer there will be, and a good one, from Him who is goodness.

Duty is a very sacred word, and we must do our duty. There is no duty, however, more imperative than that which is insisted upon by our Lord in the text that "men *ought* always to pray," and never to give in. We know in ordinary matters what a splendid characteristic it is of a strong and practical character "never to say die." Apply this to the greatest of all things—apply this to religion, and you have the teaching of our Lord. Prayer, no matter if it *seem* to be unanswered, must never be omitted. We do not entirely understand the law of God's working, but we do know that, as a matter of fact, in His providential government of the world, He requires the exercise of hope and the practice of persevering prayer.

We must pray for ourselves, we must pray for others, we must pray for the Church, we must pray for sinners, we must pray for God's people, we must pray for the dead. Unhappy mistakes, in these latter days, have hindered men from this last kind of prayer. This, however, is a duty. Our Lord must have taken part in prayers for the dead, as He was diligent in His attendance at the Temple service. Holy Scripture takes for granted all through that so we shall pray. Not a single phrase in the Bible ever forbids such a practice, as of course it would do if it were wrong. The Church of Christ has always used this devout practice from the first ; it is only miserable modern heresy which has hindered men from a faithful performance of this duty. Beware of heresy ; it means picking and choosing what you like to believe, instead of accepting the Catholic faith as God has given it to His Church. Beware of heresy ; it is, as the Apostle tells us, one of the works of the flesh. Seldom has it done more mischief than by crippling the power of God's people, in teaching them to neglect the duty of praying for the dead.

Prayer, dear friends, then, is the outcome of hope and of a real and living trust in God. Whatever else you neglect, never neglect that.

"More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of."

The night may be dark, and the clouds may be gathering; life may indeed be, nay it must be, "labour and sorrow," but there is sunlight beyond the darkness, and there is rest beyond the toil. We see the first flashes of it, we feel its first joys, when with an unconquerable hope which refuses all cowardly abatements, we follow the teaching of our Master, and are always loyal to the practice of prayer, and "never give in."

LOVE AND DEATH

"Love is as strong as death."—Cant. viii. 6.

LOVE AND DEATH

THERE can, I suppose, be little doubt that the book of Canticles represents a royal love-song. Its first intention is, doubtless, such. The Church, however, has ever felt that underneath this there lie, by inspiration, the spiritual breathings of devotion and longing of the Church to Christ, of the Bride to the Bridegroom, of the soul to God. It is a wonderful thing in a literature so devoid of anything of the kind, and among peoples quite unlike the modern western world in their modes of thought and expression of the tenderest sentiments, to find a complete poem to express apparently exalted and purified human passion. The deeper as well as the lighter emotions are touched here with a poet's hand. The more buried and solemn as well as the lighter and gladder strings of the human heart are struck by the musician and singer. Here and there emerge some of those great and thrilling thoughts which have enthralled and moved mankind. None is more

overpowering, none more unspeakable, none more certainly true than that of the text, "Love is as strong as death."

I.

Life has been, as we have noticed sadly but all too truly, described as "labour and sorrow." In it always is an element of sternness and an element of pathos; in it always that which calls out tenderness and that which demands for our well being the exercise of strength. There are two powers, however, in constant conflict; two which divide life into sunlight and shadow; two which give the power to poetry and the saddening tint to painting; two which afford to life an enriching tone, and surround it with a sense of awful and yet inspiring mystery; two which, if any, defy assault and claim unqualified and unquestionable victory; two which cannot be ignored, and to neglect which is impossible; two powers masterful and mysterious, fearful yet attractive, terrible yet helpful; two powers co-ordinate in many things, and yet so opposed—Love and Death! What of them in relation to a life of labour and sorrow?

Now, first of death. It is at least a solemn certainty. It is the mystery which is robed in gloom, and yet *is* and must be. The thought that it is

inevitable is always a serious and solemnising thought. What must be, and yet the time of whose being is unknown, is a fact which affects, and cannot fail to affect, the imagination, which is the home of fear. Certainly we must die, though how or when or where we cannot know. What men can do but once, if it be an important business, it behoves them to do well. The great act of death may be swift or slow, sudden or after protracted pain; but it combines in itself the power of labour and sorrow, and *how* we die, with any of us, will, on the whole, depend upon *how* we have lived.

That death is not only an inevitable and individual matter, but that it is universal, that it touches us *all*, does not detract from its awfulness.

> "That loss is common, would not make
> My own less bitter, rather more;
> Too common! Never morning wore
> To evening, but some heart did break."

That "the death-veil" is over the face of all the earth only adds to its seriousness and to the solemn pathos of the mystery. Chill and dank creeps the death-cold fog along the ice-streams in the mountain, or over the face of the winter sea. Here and there, it may be, are particles of sunlight, but then again falls the fog. Death is universal.

And more, the solemnity of death is brought

before us with a vividness quite terrible when we think of it as the great divorce in our own personal life. We cannot fancy ourselves apart from these poor mortal bodies, the bodies of our humiliation, as St. Paul calls them. They may be weak and suffering, they may be the homes and even springs of pain, but still they are parts of our accustomed selves. Very awful indeed to think of, is the final wrench which parts by a dread divorce the soul from the body, so long its home.

For death has, of course, its physical side. The naturalist would describe it as the chemical resolution of particles of matter, gathered for a time round a single centre, into their fundamental elements, only again to be made use of in the mysterious laboratory of Nature for fresh purposes, and again to be freed for new uses. This is all very well, and doubtless it is true. The only thing is it goes so short a way. It leaves out of account the mysterious fact of individual conscience, the awful and moving truth of personal suffering and trial and sorrow, and all that world - that real world—of the poetry and feeling which come from the trials and emotions of the human heart. Yet the physical aspect of death is terrible to contemplate when, as we know, its demands are inexorable, and behind all this frame of matter there is a thinking mind.

Leaves have their time to fall,
And flowers to wither at the north wind's breath,
And stars to set ;—but all,
Thou hast *all* seasons for thine own, O Death!

II.

And then there are obvious sadnesses in death which come forcibly home to us all. Of the many gifts that God has given us, there are few more mysterious than the sense of beauty. There may be disagreement among different men, and there is certainly disagreement between different stages of civilisation, as to what is beautiful ; but there always remains the fact that man as man yearns for and longs to attain what seems beautiful to him. Some things, some persons, some characters awake in him admiration, and with the wakening of admiration comes a sense of delight. Now, even for minds of no very high cultivation, this strange world in which we live is always arousing the sense of beauty. Think of the unspeakable delight with which in certain moods of mind we gaze upon the flower-decked meadows, the solemn woods, the vast expanse of star-lit sky! Think with what a sense of deep, unspoken joy we listen to the song of the wind in the pine woods, or in the gullies and crannies

by the mighty mountains, or bend our hearts and open our affections at the pathetic music of the sobbing sea! Beautiful are the sunsets and sundawns; beautiful the lights and shadows that sweep across the uplands in the golden afternoons; beautiful the ripple of the corn beneath the caresses of the breeze; beautiful the soft shades of the gloaming and the first rising of the stars. And this delight in outward Nature is indeed a religious delight. It is a witness to the kinship between the soul of him that gazes on this fair world and the being of Him who made it beautiful. And this, it would seem, must all go in death. I do not, of course, mean that there may not be higher and more beautiful things of which the soul may be conscious in another sphere. "Eye hath not seen," we know, "nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him," but this we accept by faith. To enter into this requires a moral exertion and a spiritual discipline and training, and even then there is before us the unknown. It is not irreligious, it is not untrusting to feel, as we do feel if we are true to ourselves, that this fair world is a beautiful thing, that we know it by an experience which in some ways is stronger than faith, and that we should be heartless and ungrateful if we did not in some sense

feel how sad it is to leave it. So it seems to me. If so, brethren, is it not true that one of the elements of the dreadfulness of death is the necessity of parting with a world that is so beautiful and that we know so well ?

And then, again, the same sense of sadness broods over the thought of separation from innocent pleasures. It is true, of course, that as the Christian life advances in the soul, and as the discipline of life is felt and used, the things of this world, even the most innocent and blessed, sit more and more lightly upon the immortal spirit. It would, however, surely be affectation to pretend that we are unaffected by those sinless joys which it has pleased God to give us here. More than that, I think for my part it would be ungrateful. "*All* good gifts come from the Father of Lights," and we may not close our eyes to the fact that wherever there is a real ring of humanity through the soul there must be a healthy sense of the delight of innocent joys. It is true that from the nature of His mission, and from His far-reaching and penetrating view of the sorrows of our race, our blessed Master was pre-eminently a "man of sorrows"; but it is equally true that the gospels take pains to impress upon us in a hundred ways the wide reach of His human sympathy with human happiness. For instance, if the story of the marriage in Cana of

Galilee teaches us anything at all, it teaches us the extent of this sympathy. And if this is so, if Christ feels with us in our times of happiness, how can we but feel the beauty of innocent pleasure and the sorrow of leaving it all? That we shall have to leave it when the last call comes is certainly one real and painful point in the dreadfulness of death.

And then, dear friends, can any one who has a heart within him deny that the shades of death seem to grow more gloomy from the thought of parting with those we love? Is there a thought more tragic than the thought of standing by a lifeless form which represents all that is left to us of some one who has been to us almost more than life? Think of the play of features; think of the changeful accents of a voice; think of the little brightnesses of sunny smiles; think of the merry laughter; think of the sweet or serious words; think of the tender caresses which all express that unfathomable thing—the love of a soul to a soul! Then think of all the outward evidence of it frozen to the awful stillness of a silence that cannot be broken! If you think of this—with any memory of any experience at all resembling it—you will know what human anguish can mean, and how filled with dreadfulness to a heart that has learned the divine power of loving is the inexorable tyranny of death.

For this alone on Death I wreak
The wrath that garners in my heart;
He put our lives so far apart
We cannot hear each other speak.

It is true. It is terrible the little common things of every day, the thousand little touches of human tenderness, the facts of love which we take for granted—as love is always asserting its eternity—to find these interrupted, broken up, shattered, cast away to the winds indeed is terrible; and instead of the music of an everlasting benediction, the solemn tolling of the bell that seems to moan around us and fill the air with "Nevermore." Yes, say what we will, if once we have known that divinest power, the power of loving, for us the ending of our mortal state must have some heart-piercing sense of sorrow, for us—there is no denying it—there must be some dreadfulness in death.

III.

Then there are, of course, considerations of the most strictly religious kind which tend to darken the shadows around the last great enemy of us all. Death is for all of us in some sense or other an entrance into the inexperienced and the unknown. By the very constitution of our nature we are creatures of custom and creatures of sense and time. It is a

very solemnising, sometimes even an alarming, thought, our entrance into a state of things where sense and time shall be no more. In vain we strain our eyes across that ocean which separates us from another world. There is nothing but dimness as to the details which make up life, whatever clearness there may be as to the main facts of the future. Christ has told us many things, but Christ has not told us all. It is God's will that we should be disciplined by the necessity of facing the unknown, but it does not make the unknown less solemn or less terrible—the knowledge that it is a necessary discipline. To enter into thick masses of accumulating fog as we sail on an untravelled ocean is not to give to us voyagers the serenity of sunlight or the confidence of experience; and however faith may—and, we trust, will—buoy us up in the last great struggle, the sense of entering upon the unknown must contribute unquestionably to the dreadfulness of death.

And then far more solemnising is the thought which is forced upon a Christian that death is an entrance to judgment. The stoutest heart may well be shaken—if it knows itself at all—by the thought of approaching that moment which is in the strict sense the *crisis* of life, when with unerring accuracy shall be decided once for all what we really are.

It is perfectly true that a Christian can well leave all such things in the hands of the All Merciful as well as the All Just. It is perfectly true that the death of Christ and the mystery of the merits of our Redeemer alter for him the aspect of the matter, but still it remains that the fact that it is a passage to judgment adds materially to the solemnity of death.

But indeed it is obvious to us that in it there must be something dreadful, as it is the penance for and the penalty of sin. We may trust, if we are Catholics, and if it pleases God to permit that we should die within reach of the ministrations of the Church, that in our last hours we may be fortified by strong sacraments and powerful prayers. But even with everything to help which has been won for us through the sacred sorrows of our Redeemer, surely if we are religious we cannot but feel that in some sense we ourselves have to suffer our penance, and that the close connection between the mystery of sin and the necessity of dying adds seriously to the dreadfulness of death.

I would have you, brethren, remember then that such meditations help to bring home to us one fact which we desire to realise here and now—viz., that *death is strong.*

It is quite true—it cannot be denied—that death

may be viewed in another aspect from that which we have been contemplating. The Christian believes that it has a blessedness all its own. To those who are in Christ it is the end of temptation; it is the close of the power of the thraldom of sin; it is an approach to the completed rule of goodness; it is a greater nearness to the blessedness of the love of God; it is a step at least towards that likeness to Christ which is promised to His people, when we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. This is true. It alleviates, but it does not do away with the pressure of the other truths connected with our great change, and even this brings before us more vividly the fact which we contemplate, that whether terrible or in some sense blessed, *death is strong*. If here we stopped, do what we might, the mountains of life would be cloud-capped, and before us we should hear with anxiety the first hurtlings of the storm. For men may be brave men, and may have disciplined themselves into a manly willingness to face danger and to look with calmness on the grave, but in the most courageous heart, if we are honest with ourselves, there must be a shrinking from the terrible divorce between the soul and its mortal habitation which is implied by the close of our life on earth. There is a fear of death which may be cowardly or faithless; but there is also a

fear of death which has nothing to do with faithlessness or cowardice, but is natural and human, and of which we need not be ashamed :

> Whatever crazy sorrow saith,
> No life that breathes with human breath
> Has ever truly long'd for death.
>
> 'Tis life, whereof our nerves are scant,
> Oh life, not death, for which we pant ;
> More life, and fuller, that I want.

Yes, my friends, look at it as we may, among the enemies that we have to face, this is one of the most formidable. Death is strong.

IV.

Now, what I would have you notice is, that not in the mere teaching of poetry or romance, not as an invention of the human power of self-deceiving, whereby the wish becomes father to the thought, but by the solemn testimony of Holy Scripture, by God's own revelation for our own comfort, there is a power that can match this formidable foe : " Love is as strong as death."

For, after all, power must be met by power, and it is foolish and thoughtless to suppose that any force that is real, especially if it bears upon the

lives of men, can be overcome by mere *laissez-faire*. It may be supposed that the great triumphs of the Church and of Christianity have been won not by an active and vigorous resistance but by the quiet and confident "standing still," and knowing that God is God. This is true, but, although as regards outward action there may have appeared to be nothing but *laissez-faire*, as a matter of fact there was the highest possible activity in the real life of those who resisted evil. Patience is power. Sacrifice is power. Endurance of suffering for a great cause is power. Yes, be well assured that if, in the deadly struggle of our human life we are to be conquerors, force must be arrayed against force, power against power.

We surely cannot close our eyes to the immense significance of those wonderful forces which are always at work in this strange world. Who but a dreamer—nay, one lulled in the deepest sleep of selfish preoccupation—can forget the mysterious significance of the forces, physical and moral, which surround our mortal life? Nature herself has the force of the storm, and the fierceness and strength of the infuriated sea and the dash of the mountain torrent, and the weird and perilous flash of the lightning, and the intensity of darkness enveloping the fierce powers of danger and adding to their

horror, amid her powers which threaten and terrify the weakness of man.

Inventive genius has constructed from the materials supplied by the workshops or the laboratories of Nature, combinations so subtle, and mechanical contrivances so full of skill, that an entirely new world of overwhelming forces has been born of the espousals of human genius with the natural powers of this mysterious world.

Need I say, my friends, that within the circuit of human nature itself there are forces of intellect and forces of natural impulse which combine to make the greatest powers in the world? Who can measure the strength and significance of a distinct and well-fitted character? Who can tell, not only in this life but in the unending reaches of that life which lies beyond the grave, what are the consequences of such a character, when it is instinct with the highest of all forces—with the grace of God? Brethren, the strength of these powers is strictly incalculable. But I would have you remember that it is a real feature of this life which we know here and now, a real note or mark of its mystery and its glory, that sooner or later, either passive or active, power must be met by power.

Well, then, let us venture to analyse one. Desire has been called the raw material, out of which is

formed human sanctity or human sin. Perverted desire is sin; purified and exalted desire is sanctity. Desire is the interior force that drives our nature on. Man, by the very constitution of his nature, cannot live merely within the circle of himself. Desire is ever driving him to objects beyond himself; and in proportion as he learns, in the true sense, to lose himself in and for another, in that proportion selfishness is conquered, and he is living the life of real love. Love, in its highest and truest sense, is the reflection in the soul of man of the Nature and Being of God. God is love. He has freely chosen us, and bound us to Himself, if we will, in the perpetual wedlock of the Incarnation. It is from that lofty love, which is God's very nature, and which prompts His every act, that we begin to learn and realise the sacredness and splendour of human love. Doubtless the name, the sacred name, has been misused, and sometimes applied to miserable counterfeits; but the existence of a counterfeit only emphasises and brings into bolder relief the fact that there is the real thing. He is a mere cynic, a traitor to his kind, a man deaf to his higher nature, a contemptible scorner, who allows himself to doubt the reality of true and noble human love. Of course—because man is a fallen creature—he has to protect and discipline

the highest possession of his heart, as he has to discipline and protect every other characteristic gift in his being. A disciplined life, and that noble self-control which keeps the hands steady on the reins so as to hold and guide a too wilful creature —*that*, as the wise man reminds us, it is which guards and guides and protects the great power of loving.

Settle it in your minds, my friends, that in proportion to its greatness and perfection human love has these marks upon it, which are also notes of the love of God.

(1) It is deep. It is that profound attitude of being which has its strength and its direction in the deepest depths of life; it is no mere play of the fancy, much less is it a passing satisfaction of the senses; it is no romantic imagination of the poetical faculty, or any mere delight in the sense of beauty. All these forces are enlisted on its side: it wields them and uses them and governs them, but it is superior to all. It is the *set* of a whole being, the bend and direction of a life, with increasing determination, and in the placid perfection of a heavenly desire, losing the selfishness which weakens the soul in the thought of and surrender to another. Deeper than the ocean depths, deeper than the far profundities of the midnight sky,

deeper than death therefore, because as deep as life which distances death, is real human love.

(2) And in proportion to its reality and perfection it is pure. The sense of beauty is a true sense in the soul. But the love which is founded on the mere sense of external beauty, on the fascination of a fair face or the attraction of a pathetic expression, or the winning effect of a graceful form—this, if this were all, would not be love at all. It may be true, it is true, that all this may come in in the effect produced upon a mind ; but where there is anything worthy of the name of love, this is only the outward sign of a sacrament. These outward and beautiful things are only the hints of interior loveliness. The truest love is founded on the beauty of a character, of a soul. In it there is immaterial intercourse between two immortal beings. The outstretching of a confidence which deepens and increases as affection develops, comes from that first great and mysterious fact that a soul has spoken to a soul. So it is that when the loveliness of youth has passed away from the human form, a deeper loveliness is recognised in every feature of those we love by us who love them, because age is a thing unknown to a soul. And thus true love, the more true it is, burns out the selfishness which stains our lower nature, because it is a flame pure, being divine.

(3) And further, in proportion to its reality and perfection, love is free. It is the free choice of an immortal being, willingly giving himself to whom he will. This is why marriages founded upon convenience, upon questions of rank or money, where love never comes into consideration at all, are such acts of ghastly sacrilege. This is why marriage, the benediction and consecration by the law and goodness of God, is so sacred a mystery when founded on the true foundation—the free choice of two living and loving souls. This is why with Christians, bound together in sacred marriage, and living a life of true religion, love deepens and intensifies as life goes on. This is why it is possible in this world to have friendships so deep, so searching, so intense, so entering into the most delicate fibres of life and soul, that men (sometimes in youth, sometimes of very different ages) have loved each other as friend and friend, as brother and brother, as father and son, with a sacred intensity which can only be compared to the deep relationship of our Blessed Master and the beloved John.

Yes, brethren, love is the highest gift that God has to give to His creature. The use of life is to learn to love. For to learn to love is to prepare for heaven.

For think: the instinct of the *ideal* is strong in

man, and no life ever really rises to its possible greatness that is not stretching towards the ideal. To love some one worthy of our best affection is for the soul to be exercising its great capacity of idealism. The object of our love may have frailties, may have flaws ; for we are human. But love is not blind. It has that illuminated eye which alone can see. It discerns the true ideal loveliness and gazes on this with a soul's intensity, when the passing flaws are utterly forgotten. It is the half-blind eye of sin and selfishness which fixes itself upon flaws and frailties, and is incapable of discerning the real truths of another's being. It is true human love, therefore, which lifts the soul with the sense of the beauty and the greatness of God, while the unloving caviller is continually fixing his eyes upon what may appear to our shortened thoughts to be flaws or difficulties in the works of the Creator. Ah ! be sure of it. It is the loving heart trained in idealism by a noble human affection which alone in the long run can over-ride the difficulties of our destiny and stand serene and peaceful in the midst of the crash of the storm.

If there is such a power—and I challenge you to say, interrogating your own hearts, is there not ?—if there is such a power, what force can withstand it ; what force can mate or match with it ? Distance ?

Why, it sweeps it before it until it remains a mere point, almost nothingness. Time? Why, so great is its force, and so strong the light of eternity upon its countenance, that it blasts that cruel usurper, and the "phantom of succession" sweeps away with its sable robes into the dimness of a distance where it dares not interfere with the power of human love. Death? Why, death is an accident in immortality, a terrible accident, a heartbreaking accident if you like, but still an accident—and do you think that that immortal thing which has descended sun-flushed from the heart of the Creator, and illuminated and glorified and possessed the life of an immortal, can trouble to stand bandying words with a mere accident in immortality? "Love is as strong as death." Why, my friends, the wise man has spoken with a cautious restraint. We may surely say the love is stronger than death and mightier than the grave.

Do I say that the trouble of time or distance or death cannot touch it? Certainly not. The weary travelling weeks and months and years go on and increase the heartache and intensify the hunger and thirst of the soul for one who is away. You stand by the brink of an interminable ocean and listen to the beating of the waves and gaze across the distant waters with an almost insufferable longing for the sight of one face, the glance of one eye, the clasp of

one hand which cannot—for distance is so terrible—be yours. You stand by the bed of death and gaze at closed eyes which once looked love into yours, and lips set and still and cold which once met yours as the meeting of two souls, which once spoke words, the music of your life, and you know with an anguish too deep for tears that these things in this world can never be again. Yes, it is true that in one strange, sad beautiful life wherever there is real love there is sure to be sorrow, but death, distance, or time are not strong enough to destroy it. It can outlive them all, with a proud sense that they are passing and *it* is eternal. Though here and now, in one mysterious mortal pilgrimage—being what we are—love must pay the tax of sorrow, the tax of sacrifice.

v.

Ah! well, after all, that which is most like God, that which above all things means unselfishness and faithfulness, that which makes the sunlight of life, yes, which gives the real poignancy to sorrow, when free and pure and deep, in other words when real, is the greatest thing in the world.

And that may be yours. The self-disciplined life, and the life of noble thoughts and lofty aspirations, is sure to learn to love. It may be the love of child

to parent, of parent to child, of lover to lover, of friend to friend. It may be the young man finding his ideal in the noble-hearted girl for whom he works and waits and prays, knowing that the thought of her is a sacred possession of which none can deprive him, hoping that her footfalls may echo side by side with his in the pilgrim path of life. It may be the young heart that finds a friendship which brings constant sympathy, and amidst life's jars a perpetual interior repose. The ideal call may come in many ways, but it is always a call to the highest, in one way or other the call to be true to ourselves, true to our noblest thoughts, true to our best purposes; the call to put our foot upon baseness and frivolity and selfishness and sin; the call to conquer the dangers of the present by the ennobling ideal thoughts—dreams you may call them if you like—of the future; it is the call to be God-like, to be growing like God.

Incarnate love was seen on Calvary, for love will be content with nothing less than to give all it can give of thought, of time, of power, of opportunity, of life itself if need be, and He who wept by the grave of Lazarus over the death of His friend, and He who gazed with such yearning affection in the moments of His unspeakable anguish on the face of His mother and on the face of John, and He who worked the first of His marvellous miracles to bless the marriage

morning of a friend, and He who looked on the young man and loved him, and had the arms of the little children about His neck and blessed them, also shed His precious blood for the love that He bore to us and has taught us thereby that we never rise up to the possible height of our being till we possess that which can smile triumphantly, if sadly, in the eyes of death, till we possess that which is the light of this world amidst all its clouds and sorrows, which is the very atmosphere and joy of heaven, nay, which is the very essence of the Being of God—a self-forgetting, an undying love. Oh! love of loves, oh! life of life, give to us the grace from the tenderness of Thy Passion, like Thee to be self-forgetting and tender and strong!

So, brethren, let us live. Love is the last word between man and man, between man and woman, between man and God. The last word. It silences death, for Christ has conquered death, and to love in Christ is to love in eternity. I repeat it, the use of life here is to learn to love. It is the true preparation for the great life beyond the grave.

> And then shall break eternal day,
> And breathe from far life-giving air,
> And life be Love, and Death be dead;
> May we be there, may we be there!

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Labour and sorrow : sermons preached on various occasions / by W.J. Knox Little. -- London : Isbister, 1894.
396p. ; 20cm.

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